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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

February 07, 2026

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Noem:

I am writing to express my deep concern and opposition to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) intention to convert two recently purchased warehouse facilities, in Schuylkill and Berks counties, into U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers. While I have been clear in my support for the enforcement of federal immigration law, this decision will do significant damage to these local tax bases, set back decades-long efforts to boost economic development, and place undue burdens on limited existing infrastructure in these communities.

The proposed conversion of these facilities into 7,500- and 1,500-bed detention centers in Tremont Township and Upper Bern Township, respectively, raises a variety of concerns. These facilities were purchased with no input from local or state officials, leaving these communities scrambling to understand why DHS and ICE selected them for large-scale detention operations.

Detention facilities impose unique and substantial demands on infrastructure both in the communities in which they are placed and in neighboring communities. I am concerned that DHS acquired these properties without taking into consideration any of the following:

- Adequate access to existing water and sewage systems, or the ability to expand existing systems, particularly at the Tremont Twp. facility;
- An increased demand on local electrical grids;
- Local law enforcement and EMS capacity; and
- Proximity to appropriate medical facilities.

Neither Tremont Twp. nor Upper Bern Twp. currently have the capacity to meet these demands. In the case of Tremont Twp. specifically, local officials have said that the proposed 7,500-bed detention facility would quadruple the existing burden on their public infrastructure system. To date, ICE has provided these communities with no information on how it will meet these expansive needs, and it would be wildly irresponsible to place such a burden on these communities.

Additionally, the acquisition of these facilities by the federal government represents a combined loss of over \$1.6M in local tax revenue per year for Schuylkill and Berks counties. This loss of vital tax dollars compounds concerns over the ability of these municipalities to meet the infrastructure needs of these facilities and would place undue strain upon the budgets of local governments and school districts in the region.

My constituents are concerned that DHS and ICE made the decision to purchase these facilities without any local input yet expect the residents of these communities to shoulder the infrastructure, public safety, sanitation, and economic burdens imposed on them. Frankly, these are concerns that I share.

To that end, I request that DHS and ICE provide the following before moving forward with either project:

1. A briefing for my office on the criteria used to select viable properties for conversion into ICE detention centers, including specific details on the decision to purchase the Tremont and Upper Bern Twp. properties;
2. A detailed impact assessment addressing infrastructure, public safety, public health, economic development, and fiscal concerns for these communities;
3. A commitment that federal funds will cover all necessary infrastructure upgrades and ongoing costs associated with these facilities; and
4. A commitment to a period of public engagement and dialogue with these communities.

Due to these significant concerns, it is my fear that DHS and ICE did not perform any due diligence, spending more than \$200 million in tax dollars for warehouses that cannot be adequately converted and further eroding trust between Pennsylvanians and the Federal government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Fetterman', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

John Fetterman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Border Management,
Federal Workforce, and Regulatory Affairs