



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2020

CONTACT: Sito Negron

915.227.0360 (m)

El Paso State Senator and State Representatives call for release of non-violent detainees

Also request information regarding COVID-19 safety protocols

EL PASO – Hundreds of migrants are detained under unsafe conditions in facilities, risking the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 among both staff and detainees. Because of this, the El Paso state delegation has joined with 28 immigrant advocacy organizations and legal representatives requesting the release of non-violent undocumented immigrants.

In a letter addressed to Sector Chiefs of the Border Patrol, Customs and Border Protection, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the delegation notes that "legal representatives have shared testimonials from detainees who report a lack of personal protective equipment at any facility, no social distancing, unhygienic conditions, and that cases of COVID-19 among detainees and/or staff are not adequately investigated.

"Additionally, it has been reported that transfers continue without the release of information regarding the protocol implemented to safely transfer detainees across the country."

Almost 600 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in El Paso, which has only 75 ICU beds available. Two cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed at the Otero facility, and four cases have been confirmed at the El Paso Processing Center in the past several days.

"If these cases were to lead to an outbreak at the Otero or the EPPC facility or another facility where detainees are held, our local health care system would reach a breaking point within days," the delegation writes in the letter.

The delegation letter requests that the agencies "work collaboratively with local governments, public health agencies, hospitals, and other area stakeholders to plan for both the release of detainees and the protocols for detecting and treating COVID-19 in your facilities.

"In addition, we ask that you share information about any existing COVID-19 protocols with the local agencies and advocates who are managing pandemic response and interacting with the immigration system."

A copy of the letter is attached.

Members of the El Paso state legislative delegation are Sen. José Rodríguez, House Speaker pro tempore Joe Moody, Rep. Mary González, Rep. César Blanco, Rep. Lina Ortega, and Rep. Art Fierro.