

2354 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

PHONE: 202-225-6116
FAX: 202-225-5590

WWW.PINGREE.HOUSE.GOV



CHELLIE PINGREE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
1ST DISTRICT MAINE

January 22, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Noem,

I write to express my profound outrage regarding the recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operation underway in my home state of Maine. The execution of this operation and the Department's related public messaging represent a deeply troubling breakdown in accountability, transparency, and respect for the Constitution.

While Congress has given the Department of Homeland Security the authority to enforce federal immigration law, that authority is neither unlimited nor exempt from oversight. Enforcement actions that result in hundreds of individuals being abducted, serious and numerous apparent violations of due process rights, and widespread fear in immigrant communities require immediate, forthright answers.

In my capacity as a Member of Congress, I demand a full accounting of the legal basis for arrests made during this operation.

- I am requesting a comprehensive report of “Operation Catch of the Day” that answers:
 - How many individuals were taken into custody pursuant to valid judicial warrants signed by a federal judge or magistrate;
 - how many were arrested without such warrants;
 - of those detained, how many had prior convictions for violent or otherwise dangerous crimes; and
 - how is the Department defining “dangerous criminal” when publicly characterizing this operation?
- Alarming reports suggest that basic due process protections may have been disregarded. Please explain, in detail:
 - How ICE ensured that individuals were informed of their constitutional and statutory rights at the time of arrest;
 - how many detainees were provided timely access to legal counsel; and
 - how many were placed into expedited or summary removal proceedings without a meaningful opportunity to present claims for relief under U.S. law.

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEES:

INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES, RANKING MEMBER
AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

SUBCOMMITTEES:

BIOTECHNOLOGY, HORTICULTURE, AND RESEARCH
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

2 PORTLAND FISH PIER, SUITE 304
PORTLAND, ME 04101
PHONE: 207-774-5019
FAX: 207-871-0720



108 MAIN STREET
WATERVILLE, ME 04901
PHONE: 207-873-5713
FAX: 207-873-5717

- The Department must also account for the immigration status of those detained:
 - How many individuals taken into custody possessed documentation demonstrating authorization to remain in the United States, including pending asylum claims, Temporary Protected Status, lawful permanent residency, or other valid authorization?
 - What verification procedures were followed prior to detention, and how many lawfully present individuals were nevertheless detained, even temporarily, as a result of this operation?
- Additional transparency is necessary regarding where detainees were taken following arrest.
 - Where are these individuals currently being held, and under what custody classifications?
 - Were families, legal representatives, or local officials notified prior to or following such transfers, or were individuals effectively disappeared from their communities without notice?

I am also outraged by multiple reports from Maine indicating that ICE agents engaged in brazenly intimidating and threatening behavior toward bystanders and local residents. According to local reporting, an ICE agent drove to the home of a resident who was observing and documenting an operation that morning and told her, “This is a warning. We know you live right here.” Residents also reported that agents threatened bystanders with pepper spray, creating a climate of fear and coercion. Agents’ visible presence during a school commute alarmed parents and community members, sending a clear message that ordinary citizens could be targeted simply for lawfully observing activity. You state that you are no longer allowing American citizens to be terrorized, yet that is exactly what your agents are doing: terrorizing everyday Americans for practicing their legal rights. This, yet again, suggests your operation was never intended to be a targeted enforcement activity, but rather an attempt to sow confusion, disrupt daily life, and create a pervasive atmosphere of cruelty.

Beyond the conduct of the operation itself, I am deeply disturbed by its name, “Operation Catch of the Day.” This terminology is dehumanizing, offensive, and wholly inappropriate for a federal law enforcement action involving real people, families, and communities. Referring to human beings as something to be caught in a net reflects a disturbing disregard for human dignity and reinforces the perception that this operation was designed to intimidate and degrade rather than to uphold the law responsibly. Such language is not humorous, and not consistent with the Department’s supposed commitment to professionalism and civil rights.

Finally, I am appalled that ICE appears to have prioritized a partisan media narrative over communication with the communities and officials most directly impacted by this operation. It appears Fox News received an exclusive look into the operation, as local officials, community leaders, legal service providers, and impacted families went without basic information. This approach gives the unmistakable impression that the operation was designed to generate political optics rather than to carry out careful, targeted, and lawful immigration enforcement. If the Department is prepared to publicly showcase this operation to the press, it should have no difficulty providing Congress, and therefore the affected communities, with full transparency and accountability.

Let me be clear: congressional oversight of federal law enforcement is not discretionary, and it is not subordinate to public relations strategy. I expect full and prompt cooperation. I look forward to your written response to all questions posed above within the next 48 hours, along with all relevant documentation.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

2 PORTLAND FISH PIER, SUITE 304
PORTLAND, ME 04101
PHONE: 207-774-5019
FAX: 207-871-0720



108 MAIN STREET
WATERVILLE, ME 04901
PHONE: 207-873-5713
FAX: 207-873-5717