

DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ  
23RD DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

February 1, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

We write once again to request that you move expeditiously to close the Glades County Detention Center in Moore Haven, Florida. Glades operates as a migrant detention center under contract with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Many of us wrote to you this past summer requesting the contract be terminated and that no individuals be transferred to or from the facility.<sup>1</sup> Reports of abuse of both local residents detained and those transferred in from across the country have unfortunately escalated since that time. We understand the facility's contract is up for renewal in March 2022. The situation is not improving and we respectfully urge the Department to immediately terminate its contract with Glades County and close this facility.

We remain extremely concerned about the reports coming out of Glades and understand a group of advocacy organizations sent your department a memorandum<sup>2</sup> (memo) specifically on racist abuse at the facility last month. The memo outlines a systemic pattern of racially based abuse, documented via independent complaints to several lawyers and organizations. The treatment of Black immigrants at Glades includes but is not limited to disproportionate: veiled death threats and threats of physical violence, use of pepper spray, solitary confinement, extreme forms of physical violence like using the restraint chair, off-camera physical assault, and punitive, arbitrary administrative sanctions. Black immigrants at Glades are also subject to anti-immigrant verbal abuse that is often tied to their nationality. These events are unacceptable and have continued at an alarming rate under this Administration.

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<sup>1</sup> See

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a33042eb078691c386e7bce/t/60f9b4f9ada0083784a9c028/162697752997/Glades+County+Detention+Letter+Signed.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See

[https://www.acluf1.org/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/memo\\_to\\_dhs\\_re\\_racism\\_at\\_glades\\_detention\\_center\\_11.18.21.pdf](https://www.acluf1.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/memo_to_dhs_re_racism_at_glades_detention_center_11.18.21.pdf)

Further, we have been apprised of reports on the overuse of toxic chemicals<sup>3</sup> and a recent carbon monoxide leak<sup>4</sup> in the facility, both of which resulted in individuals in the facility needing urgent medical care. On November 23, 2021, a carbon monoxide buildup in the kitchen at Glades due to staff negligence resulted in the poisoning of nine people who were working in the kitchen: six detained individuals and three Glades staff members. Of these, four detained men and one female Glades staff member were hospitalized. The other two detained individuals and two Glades staff members who were exposed to the gas experienced symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, including headaches, dizziness, and shortness of breath, but were not taken to the hospital that day. Weeks after the carbon monoxide poisoning occurred, many of the affected individuals report continuing to experience symptoms of the poisoning and have received little to no medical treatment for these ongoing medical issues.

As a result of these tragic events, other federal oversight bodies have been notified about the conditions at Glades and have even reached out to advocacy organizations in Florida for further information. Pertaining to the carbon monoxide leak, a letter<sup>5</sup> was recently sent to DHS leadership and ICE officials, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), and relevant State and local entities. The letter details how the leak violated both 2019 National Detention Standards for Non-dedicated Facilities (“NDS”) and OSHA regulations.

Complaints related to a breadth of other hostile conditions, such as sexual harassment and abuse, retaliation for peaceful protest, and patterns of COVID endangerment and medical abuse have also continued at the facility, in addition to the reports of racist abuse, toxic chemicals, and the carbon monoxide leak. This is demonstrated by the over 35 complaints filed related to Glades since the onset of the pandemic, with at least 15 filed under this Administration.

These reports are highly disturbing and completely unacceptable. Further, as noted previously Glades should be closed for the sake of good governance and responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. The detention center is not operationally necessary. ICE has guaranteed Glades County payment for 300 beds, yet the current population is around 30. No one should be treated this way, especially under your watch and at the taxpayer’s expense. People’s lives continue to be in danger every minute that the Glades Detention Center remains open.

We respectfully urge you to terminate your contract with Glades County immediately. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/immigrants-in-u-s-detention-exposed-to-hazardous-disinfectants-every-day/>

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/glades-county-detention-center-carbon-monoxide-exposure-13425720>

<sup>5</sup> See [https://www.acluf.org/sites/default/files/field\\_documents/carbon\\_monoxide\\_poisoning\\_glades\\_dec\\_2021.pdf](https://www.acluf.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/carbon_monoxide_poisoning_glades_dec_2021.pdf)



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



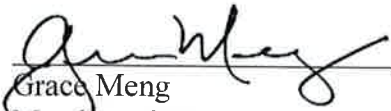
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Al Lawson  
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Grace Meng  
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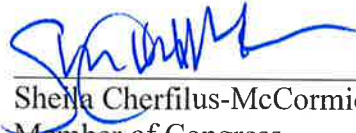
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Member of Congress



Darren Soto  
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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
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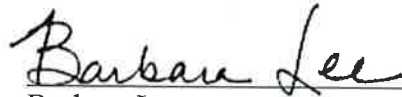
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