



Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC)
P.O. Box 40677
San Francisco, CA 94140

March 10, 2015

Immigration & Customs Enforcement
Attn: Andrew Lorenzen-Strait & Claire Trickler-McNulty
500 12th St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Mr. Andrew Lorenzen-Strait and Ms. Claire Trickler-McNulty,

We are writing to request your approval to establish a national ICE Pro Bono Telephone extension that will be staffed by CIVIC volunteers for the purpose of expanding our Pen Pal Program. We are grateful that at the ICE-NGO Working Group meeting on February 3, 2015, Mr. Lorenzen-Strait had expressed interest in this project and requested that we follow up with a more formal request.

As you are familiar, CIVIC is a nationwide organization that works to end the isolation of people in U.S. immigration detention. For the past year, CIVIC volunteers have explored establishing a Pen Pal Program to help continue their work to end the isolation of men and women across the country. There is significant need for such a pen pal system. While there are nearly 40 visitation programs across the country, there remain over 200 detention facilities without a visitation program. Many of these facilities, such as LaSalle in Louisiana, are far from metropolitan areas, which makes it difficult for us to provide people in detention with a connection to the outside world through a weekly visitor volunteer. To overcome this challenge, we have created a Pen Pal Program to connect volunteers in any part of the country with people in immigration detention who do not yet have visitors.

Within the last year, CIVIC has connected approximately 50 volunteers to people in detention who desire a pen pal. Many of these volunteers are retired and immobile themselves. For example, Cornelis is a volunteer in California who began suffering from arthritis in 1970. He is limited to the use of four fingers in his right hand and one finger in his left. He was one of our first pen pal volunteers and for the last year, he has been writing to a person in immigration detention. The experience has been so uplifting for him and has even helped with his arthritis—recently, he began playing the organ again at his church for the first time after 22 years! Likewise the woman that Cornelis wrote to talks about how his letters gave her hope and helped her to endure the isolating experience of immigration detention.

We are excited about expanding this pen pal program. Currently, we are limited to connecting pen pal volunteers to people in detention at facilities where we have visitation programs, as we are generally only in contact with people at these facilities. A national ICE Pro Bono Telephone extension will allow us to connect volunteers to people detained across the country, especially in facilities where we do not and might never have a visitation program. More specifically, a national ICE Pro Bono Telephone extension will allow us to reach people in detention who are isolated, explain to them over the phone what the Pen Pal Program entails, answer any of their questions about the program, learn a little about their background and their location so that we can quickly facilitate an appropriate match to a volunteer, and continue to remain in touch with them.

We have approximately 100 volunteers who are waiting to be connected to someone in detention. Given this reserve of volunteers and our commitment to recruiting new volunteers once the extension is secured, we are

confident we will be able to meet the demand for pen pals from people in detention.

In early 2012, Ms. Trickler-McNulty had mentioned that it would be possible for CIVIC to obtain a national ICE Pro Bono Telephone extension. While this was a generous offer, at the time, we did not have the capacity to undertake such an important task. However, due to CIVIC's growth in the past couple of years, we do have that capacity through our volunteers. We are now confident that we will be able to effectively answer calls from detention facilities made to us through the pro bono extension.

In fact, we have already been testing out the ability for volunteers to effectively answer phone calls from detention facilities on a smaller basis. Most recently, our affiliated visitation program at the Krome Service Processing Center in Miami obtained an ICE Pro Bono Telephone extension that is staffed by the Friends of Miami-Dade Detainees volunteers.

The Pen Pal Program and the ICE Pro Bono Telephone extension will help detainees across the country maintain morale and ties to the outside community. Similar to CIVIC's affiliated visitation programs, the purpose of this new service will be to offer detained immigrants a friendly voice on the other line and consistent pen pal to end their isolation and affirm their dignity and worth. This service promotes ICE's Performance-Based National Detention Standards (PBNDS). Standard 5.6 of the 2011 PBNDS encourages reasonable and equitable access to telephone services so that detainees may maintain ties with others in the community. Similarly, Standard 5.1 of the 2011 PBNDS also encourages correspondence by mail between detainees and the community.

While a national pen pal program for ICE detainees is new, it will build on well-established programs that currently exist at local ICE facilities, in the U.S. criminal justice system, and abroad. Some of CIVIC's affiliated visitation programs run pen pal programs at the facilities in which they visit. Likewise, in the criminal justice system, there are a number of organizations offering pen pal services, such as WriteAPrisoner that has engaged 150,000 people in writing letters to prisoners since 2001. Other programs that exist in the criminal justice system include PrisonPenPals, Inmate.com, Friends Beyond the Wall, and Meet an Inmate. In England, the Bent Bars Project provides Pen Pals to LGBTQI people in immigration detention, who are afforded access to personal cell phones while in immigration detention.¹ CIVIC has developed guidelines for its pen pal volunteers as well as oversight for the program.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please find a letter of support from over 100 organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union, the Women's Refugee Commission, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, who have an interest in CIVIC obtaining a national Pro Bono Telephone extension and effectively implementing the first national Pen Pal Program for ICE detainees. We are happy to set up a time to discuss this with you further, and we look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christina M. Fialho".

Christina M. Fialho
Co-Founder/Executive Director
Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC)

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/385879/2014-12-09_08_2012_-_Mobile_phones_and_cameras_in_IRCs_final_external.pdf

March 10, 2015

We, the undersigned, respectfully request that ICE provide Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC) with a national Pro Bono Telephone extension. As legal service providers and other NGOs that have regular contact with detainees, we have seen firsthand the benefits that CIVIC's affiliated visitation programs can provide. We also understand that there are many people in detention who are held in facilities far from their loved ones and in areas where CIVIC does not yet have a visitation program. These individuals suffer from extreme loneliness and depression, which CIVIC's telephone extension and accompanying Pen Pal Program can help to alleviate. Many of us know that CIVIC's work on visitation is valued by many ICE officials and detention facility staff; we are excited to see ICE provide CIVIC with the ability to expand its support to detainees across the country so that each person in each immigration detention facility has the opportunity to maintain morale and ties to the outside community.

Sincerely,

Alas Migratorias
Alliance for Immigration Justice
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
Americans for Immigrant Justice
Arkansas Coalition for Peace and Justice
Arkansas Interfaith Alliance
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-LA (Advancing Justice-LA)
Asian Law Caucus
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, LA
ASPIRE
Baurkot & Baurkot Attorneys
Beacon Presbyterian Fellowship
Boston New Sanctuary Movement
California Immigrant Policy Center
Canal Alliance
Casa de Paz (Colorado)
Casa Esperanza
Casa Mariposa Visitation Project (Arizona)
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles
Coalition of Latino Leaders-CLILA
Coloradans For Immigrant Rights, a program of the American Friends Service Committee
Community to Community Development C2C
Conversations With Friends (Minnesota)
Courage Campaign
DC Detention Visitation Network
Defund Detention: Take Back Adelanto Campaign
Detainees Friend Project, Neighborhood of the Unitarian Universalist Church
Detention Dialogues
Detention Watch Network
Dolores Street Community Services
Dream Action Coalition
East Bay Immigrant Youth Coalition
Eloy Visitation Program

El Refugio Ministry (Georgia)
El Zocalo Immigrant Resource Center
Faithful Friends/Amigos Fieles, Sacramento
Faith in Action Kern County
First Friends of New Jersey and New York
Friends of Broward Detainees
Friends of Miami-Dade Detainees
Friends of Orange County Detainees
Global Campaign to End Child Detention
Grassroots Leadership
Guadalupe Iglesia Presbiteriana, Guadalupe, AZ
Human Rights Defense Center
Human Rights Watch
Hutto Visitation Program
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Immigrant Defense Project
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)
Immigration Center for Women and Children
Immigration Task Force of the Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, Walnut Creek, CA
Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Coalition
Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights
Interfaith Committee for Detained Immigrants
International Detention Coalition
Jesuit Social Research Institute
Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Work Group, Presbytery of San Fernando
Justice Strategies
Korean American Resource and Cultural Center
Korean Resource Center
La Colectiva De Mujeres y Day Labor
La Raza Community Resource Center
La Union del Pueblo Entero
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area
League of United Latin American Citizens
League of United Latin American Citizens – Iowa
Legal Services for Children
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)
Lowcountry Immigration Coalition
Ministerios Nuevo Amanecer
Mujeres Unidas y Activas
National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC)
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Immigration Law Center
National Employment Law Project
National Justice for Our Neighbors
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium

New Hampshire Immigrant Visitation Program
New Jersey Advocates for Immigrant Detainees
Out4Immigration
Peace & Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Santa Monica
Pilgrim Gospel Mission
Public Counsel
Queer Detainee Empowerment Project
The Reformed Church of Highland Park (NJ)
Refugee Immigrant Ministry
Research Institute Without Walls
Rights for All People
Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network
San Francisco Labor Council
SEIU Local 87
Social Justice Collaborative
South Asian Americans Leading Together
St. John's United Methodist Church, Watts
St. Mark Presbyterian Church
Transgender Law Center
Unitarian Universalist Church of Long Beach California
United Methodist Women
Unite Here
Waco Immigration Alliance
Weill Cornell Center for Human Rights at Cornell University
Women's Refugee Commission
Young Workers United