

1983, and Dr. Sims was not only a school board member but a very trusted pharmacist in the community.

Throughout his tenure, he championed vocational programs, advocated for students who needed additional support, and worked to strengthen community involvement in our local schools.

He was an amazing member and a very loyal Methodist.

I want to give special recognition to his family that stood by him for so many years: his wife, Nancy; his three children; and his grandchildren. He really was someone who was a testament to believing in kids, faith, and built an amazing legacy during his tenure on the board. He was a dear, dear friend of mine, and we are going to miss him so much.

Mr. Speaker, we thank him for his years of service. We thank his family for the many years of service in which he gave, and, T.A. Sims, I want you to know up there that you made a big difference in everyone's life. We will miss you, sir.

□ 1550

#### ENACTING FEDERAL CORPORATE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE LAW

(Ms. HOYLE of Oregon asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, for 35 years, PeaceHealth Hospital, the only level II trauma center between Corvallis, Oregon, and Crescent City, California, abruptly ended its contract with our local emergency room staffing group, Eugene Emergency Physicians.

With little notice and significant local opposition, PeaceHealth has awarded the contract to a Georgia-based management and medical staffing firm, Apollo.

Beyond losing locally based physicians who have met or exceeded performance standards in a hospital that has refused to address the lack of adequate patient care rooms, the Apollo Group appears to be a shell company set up to get around Oregon's law to ban the corporate practice of medicine.

The Apollo Group bills itself as physician-owned; however, their office houses 40 local groups in Atlanta, which also houses ValorBridge, a venture capital fund managed by the same person who manages the Apollo staffing firm.

When my office asked PeaceHealth CEO Jim McGovern about the obvious conflict, he said: "That is just a side hustle." Uber is a side hustle. Corporate practice of medicine is not a side hustle.

Allowing venture capital firms and hedge funds to siphon money from our healthcare system instead of providing quality, affordable, and appropriate care to our communities is what is wrong with our healthcare system. We need to follow Oregon's lead and make this practice illegal.

#### MASS DEPORTATIONS AND FAMILY SEPARATIONS

(Ms. BARRAGÁN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Mr. Speaker, Trump and Republicans are the party of mass deportations and family separations. That is right, Republicans are the party of putting children in prison, 3-year-olds and 5-year-olds, inflicting lifelong trauma on our children.

What happened to family values?

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about 5-year-old Gael, whom I met in Dilley, Texas. He was totally bloated. He hadn't gone to the bathroom in 8 days. He went to the medical center. They pretty much dismissed him, saying, "Oh, here are some laxatives," and let him go, a 5-year-old in pain and suffering. This is how they are treating our children. It is disgusting, and it needs to end.

We need to end these child prisons.

#### END CRUEL IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT AGAINST KIDS

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Ms. DEXTER of Oregon was recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.)

##### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and submit extraneous material into the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. VAN EPPS). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Oregon?

There was no objection.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you about a second grader named Diana Crespo-Gonzalez. She loves to draw, and she loves school.

On January 16, she was sick. She had a persistent fever, her nose wouldn't stop bleeding, and her parents did what any good parents would do. They took their child to see a doctor. They never made it inside.

Instead, immigration agents surrounded their car. The parents pleaded with the agents to just let their daughter get seen.

Think about that for a second, Mr. Speaker. Put yourself in their car, wondering if you made a mistake by taking your child to a doctor.

Shortly after, Diana and her parents were detained and transported 2,000 miles from their home in Gresham, Oregon, to the Dilley child family detention facility in Texas, the largest child detention facility in the United States.

I will say that again: the largest child detention facility in the United States. That is a sentence that should not exist.

The conditions at Dilley are not just bad; they are indefensible and inhumane. The food is inedible. One father detained there with his child said: "We

were given wormy food, and when someone spoke out about it and said that the children should get better food, he was taken in the middle of the night and threatened that he and his family would be separated."

Another said: "Sometimes there are strange things in the food, and it seems like strange parts of an animal that shouldn't be in the food, but many children do not eat the food here. It worries me when there are so many small children who are just not eating."

A 14-year-old said that his 7-year-old brother stopped eating entirely. Many report that the water is not drinkable, that it is too salty, and that it smells of chemicals. If you do drink it, your stomach turns with pain.

It is not just food and water, but the foundation of human life. As if that weren't bad enough, these kids and families are also being deprived of sleep, healthcare, and education. Children inside have reported ideas of self-harm, even suicide.

A 14-year-old who was detained for 45 days said: "Since I got to this center, all you will feel is sadness and mostly depression."

Mr. Speaker, if you advocate for yourself, or as a parent advocating for your child, there is the threat of retaliation.

One father said: "We are scared to ask for anything because the officers start threatening us that they will put us in different detention centers and put our children in foster care."

This is where they sent Diana, a second grader who just needed to see a doctor.

I couldn't stand back while she was in prison there, and I had a chance to help. One of the most important lessons I have learned in my first year in Congress, Mr. Speaker, is that you cannot defend your constituents from behind a desk. Showing up and advocating for the people you represent matters.

So I traveled to Texas with plane tickets in hand to bring Diana and her parents back to Oregon. When I arrived, officials repeatedly blocked my entry, giving shifting and contradictory explanations as to why.

I was told I could not enter because of measles cases, despite an officer telling me just the day before that there were no active cases and no risk.

I was told to leave. I was told to wait. I was told nothing at all. The message was clear: Don't look too closely.

Oversight isn't optional. When ICE blocked me from entering, I made it clear that if they would not let me in, they would at least bring my constituents out to speak with me. After hours of waiting and arguing, ICE actually did more than that. They released the Crespo-Gonzalez family altogether. I was able to escort them home.

Diana made it home, but there are children today who are still trapped in Dilley. Legally, children are not supposed to be in custody for more than 20 days, yet dozens of children have been

detained at Dilley for over 3 months, one-third of a school year spent in prison—children who are sick, children who are scared, and children who do not understand why this is happening to them.

It is not just children who have been detained who feel the trauma of this immigration crackdown. Children in my district live in fear of the ICE man. He comes to them in their dreams, and it worries them that they are going to come to get them or a loved one. I heard it from a teacher in Oregon who shared how devastating ICE's presence has been for her students.

She said: "Many students stopped coming to school for weeks, either because parents did not feel safe to bring them to school or students did not feel safe to leave their parents, knowing they might come home to an empty house."

Across this country, ICE is targeting children outside of schools, outside of clinics, and outside of their own homes. Immigration enforcement against children is inhumane and unnecessary. Families can and should be able to navigate their immigration cases together and in community, with the support of loved ones and legal services.

This is about who we are and who we want to be as a country. Kids need care and compassion, not cruelty and cages.

Today, we will spotlight the importance of ending cruel immigration enforcement against children once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO), who is my co-host for this important event.

□ 1600

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding. I thank Congresswoman DEXTER for being such a strong and bold voice for justice and fairness in this House. She is such a great, welcome addition to the Caucus and to the House, and we appreciate her work.

We are convening this effort because of the urgent discussion that is necessary to bring very strong, laser-sharp focus to this issue.

The Trump administration has repeatedly shown that it is willing to use any method in its brutal and inhumane immigration agenda. That includes detaining kids like 5-year-old Liam Ramos on his way home from school in January in Minnesota or ending longstanding guidance that banned immigration enforcement activities at sensitive locations like our hospitals, courthouses, or schools. It includes putting a former ICE official in charge of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement, or ORR, the agency responsible for unaccompanied children.

It is no surprise, then, that this administration is treating unaccompanied children like criminals. Often, these children arriving in the United States without a parent or guardian

are fleeing persecution, violence, and trafficking.

Congress expressly authorized the ORR to care for unaccompanied children with a separate charge from immigration enforcement. However, tragically, over the past year, the ORR and ICE have become one and the same, and it is traumatizing our children.

Unaccompanied children are now being held by ORR for an average of over 200 days. Let me repeat that. Kids who are alone who have fled all that they have ever known are being held by our government for over half a year of their life. They thought they were coming to America for a better life.

In many instances, these facilities are failing to provide basic care to these children. Yet, they continue to hold these kids even when they have a family member who is ready to care for them outside of ORR custody.

Take Diego. His father was approved to care for him after he arrived unaccompanied in 2024, but he was re-detained in November of 2025 and held for 4 months because of a new DNA requirement by ORR.

To make matters worse, ORR is now sharing data and information on potential sponsors with ICE, so many parents and family members who want to care for these children are frightened to provide any information that could lead to their arrest or their detention. On several occasions, ICE has used these kids as a lure, a lure to detain family members.

Carlos, a father with temporary protected status, was detained during a December 2025 appointment with ICE in New Mexico that he thought was a regular step in his effort to reunify with his 14- and 16-year-old children who had been held in ORR custody for almost a year.

While Carlos was released on a judge's order, his children are still in ORR custody. His son is now 15 and regularly has panic attacks. His daughter is afraid that she will wait for her father forever. That is despicable. These draconian tactics are creating lasting trauma for these kids and their families, and we are already seeing the effects.

No child should have to worry about whether they will be used as bait by the government. No child should sit in detention for months on end. No child should face additional trauma here in our United States.

This issue is deeply personal for me. As a once-New York State legislator, one of my proudest accomplishments was passing Timothy's Law, which enacted mental health care parity across the State of New York. The law was named after a young constituent of mine, Timothy O'Clair, who, after suffering with mental illness and not receiving the care that he needed, took his own life at 12 years of age.

We must take the mental health of children seriously. They are not pawns. They are not bait. They are not criminals. They are children who deserve

care. Stop traumatizing children. Stop the cruel immigration enforcement against our kids.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Vermont (Ms. BALINT).

Ms. BALINT. Mr. Speaker, I thank both my colleagues for holding this Special Order. It is such an important issue that so many of our constituents care about. I know that, representing my home State of Vermont, people are just absolutely outraged by what is happening.

I am a former teacher. I am also a mom of two teenagers, and I know deep in my bones that we have to care for all our children. When I see ICE targeting children and using kids as bait to get to their parents, I feel sick. I am disgusted.

What has happened to our humanity, our moral compass in this country?

From the start of Trump's term until last October, at least 3,800 kids were booked into ICE custody. This includes roughly 500 children under the age of 5 and at least 20 infants.

Do you remember the experience of Liam Ramos? He was 5 years old when he was picked up. He was 5. I remember what my kids were doing when they were 5. My son and daughter were learning how to spell their names. They were learning how to count to 10. They were drawing and singing and riding their bikes. They were running around with wild abandon on a playground.

This is what we are talking about when we talk about 5-year-old kids. Our government is locking them up with our taxpayer money. This is who President Trump and Stephen Miller want us to believe are villains in our national story. They are kids. They are kids.

As my colleague said: What is happening in these facilities? They don't have clean water. They don't have food that they can eat that isn't filled with worms. Think about that. There is nothing that justifies treating children like this. Nothing.

They are our kids, and I am using that because it is the truth of the matter. It is not somebody else's kids. These are our kids. They live in our communities. They live in our districts, and we should care about all of our kids. Every single child in this country deserves care and humane treatment. It is that simple.

What is happening at the hands of ICE is an abomination. Kids are not the enemy. I can't believe I even have to say that on the floor of the House of Representatives of the United States of America, that kids are not the enemy. This is a fundamental question of decency and who we claim to be as Americans.

Are we a country that looks at a child and sees innocence and wonder and potential or are we looking at a child and seeing some kind of enemy, an enemy of the people?

This is absurd. This is unconscionable. Again, it is happening with our

taxpayer money. You cannot look away. I know what Vermonters believe, which is why I took to the floor today. Children deserve protection and dignity, period. No exceptions. We must fight together to find our way, our collective way, back to decency and compassion in this country.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GARCÍA).

Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representatives DEXTER and TONKO for shining a spotlight on the impact on children from the enforcement efforts of ICE and Customs and Border Protection agents.

Here is what is happening in communities across the country: A 1-year-old baby and his parents are pepper-sprayed while driving to the grocery store.

A high school student was zip-tied and detained on his way to school despite his U.S. citizenship, and he was detained for several days.

Families with children were ripped out of bed in the dead of night, zip-tied, and detained after the apartments that they lived in were raided by agents using military helicopters, so Kristi Noem could get her videos.

Children at a daycare were startled, scared, and traumatized by the armed agents bursting into their classrooms, chasing one of their teachers to abduct her.

□ 1610

These scenes are not from a war zone. These are violent incidents that happened in Cicero, in Roscoe Village, in South Shore, and in my own neighborhood of Little Village in Chicagoland.

Those were ICE and CBP agents, paid by our tax dollars, committing atrocities, targeting my constituents and their children because of the color of their skin or the places where their parents worked.

More than 500 children were being held at the immigration detention center in Dilley, Texas, in January alone. Many for more than twice the 20 days that the law allows the government to hold children in detention.

We have seen the pictures drawn by some of these children. Their letters longing for their friends, schools, and families, a return to normalcy. Then the administration took away their crayons and paper so that people outside the detention center wouldn't learn what was happening inside.

Right now, two of my constituents are detained at Dilley, a mother and her 13-year-old son who were taken by ICE at a routine check-in appointment. Both had developed serious physical and mental issues, but ICE is denying them medical attention and medication.

They are not the only ones. Children have suffered for months because of the abuses of ICE and CBP agents. Many of them may never overcome the trauma caused by their time in detention and the violent actions of our own government.

The stories I shared are just some of the children we know about. There are hundreds of children terrorized by ICE who we don't know about.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my Republican colleagues, what is the purpose of imprisoning innocent children? No moral or legal argument exists to justify imprisoning and neglecting children. I implore my Republican colleagues to care for these children as if they were our own. Anything less is inexcusable.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. RAMIREZ).

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to share Steven's story. Who is Steven some may ask?

Steven is a constituent, and he is a 14-year-old boy, an eighth grader with autism, who spent 66 days incarcerated in Dilley Immigration Processing Center.

Steven and his dad are finally back home with their family and the community that loves them. However, this past Monday, I accompanied Steven and his father, Victor, to their check-in at ICE. I witnessed firsthand the pain and the trauma caused by the cruelty of separation and detention. Each day that Steven spent in inhumane and unsanitary conditions in Dilley took a toll on this little boy.

Steven didn't want to go to his check-in on Monday because the last time he showed up for the check-in with his father as he had been told, he was kidnapped for 66 days.

When he got there and he saw me, he was grateful, but I can see the great distress in the face of this little boy. I saw a child as we went in for his check-in cower in the corner of a chair in the fetal position with his ears covered because he was so afraid to hear the words that he and his father heard the last time he was there. He was so afraid of going back to detention.

Let me say it and let me say it loud and clear in the people's House. Shame on every person in this country who thinks it is acceptable to terrorize children. Shame on you who talk about being the party of children and family who is locking them up in cages, who is separating them from their loved ones, from their community, denying them from air, from Sun, from play, from laughter, from joy, and every single thing a baby, a child deserves.

President Mandela said: "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

Incarcerating children is an evil, morally bankrupt practice that calls into question any commitment our Nation has or claims to care about their preciousness.

We must unleash our collective outrage. Don't look away and don't normalize children in cages. We must demand that no other children experience what Steven has experienced or more than 3,800 children have experienced in ICE so far.

We will melt ICE, and I have a bill to do just that. We will dismantle the De-

partment of Homeland Security because, frankly, at this juncture, nothing less is acceptable.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE).

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to the Trump administration's careless and cruel family separation policies.

Experts like the Society for Research and Child Development and the American Academy of Pediatrics agree that immigration detention and separation is a deeply traumatic, adverse childhood experience causing post-traumatic stress disorder, and it is never in the best interest of the child.

Yet, day after day, ICE continues to abduct children from their families, subjecting them to prisonlike confinement and conditions and exposing them to lifelong trauma.

Since President Trump took office, the number of children held in ICE detention each day has increased sixfold. By October 2025, at least 3,800 children had entered ICE custody and more than 1,300 of them were detained for over 20 days.

Mr. Speaker, these are not just numbers. These are real children, human beings whose lives have been disrupted and damaged permanently.

DHS facilities often fail to meet the basic standards of care, decent and adequate food, including medical care and mental health care. We just cannot stand by and watch while the administration forcibly separates families, inflicts long-term trauma on our Nation's youth, and strips our youth of safety and dignity.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. VARGAS).

Mr. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the Trump administration's immigration crackdown has unleashed a cruelty that really knows no limits.

Trump's ICE agents have beaten, tear-gassed, and murdered innocent people. They have wrongfully detained and deported U.S. citizens, but nothing demonstrates the cruelty of this administration more than the way that they have treated children, children, as we have heard today.

There has been a sixfold increase in the daily number of children in ICE detention under Trump. These are children like Liam Conejo Ramos, the little boy in the blue hat who was detained on his walk home from school and sent to the Dilley Family Detention center, or children like Susej, a 9-year-old detained at Dilley, who, in a letter released by ProPublica, wrote: "I miss my school and my friends. . . . I have been here too long." She is a 9-year-old girl.

My wife and I have two daughters, and the Psalmist tells us in Psalm 127 that children are a blessing. They are not a burden. They are a blessing. I can tell you for a fact that our children

have been a blessing. I remember my girls putting on little hats. I remember how much they loved those little hats. Those memories are etched in my heart.

□ 1620

I think every parent, when they saw that little boy with the blue hat, remembered their child and said: How can we be doing this in our own country? What an immorality and what an injustice this is. Yet, we do it, and we do it every day.

These children have been held captive in detention and are missing their friends. They are falling behind at school and facing deplorable conditions, as we have heard today. Their health and wellness are deteriorating.

It is just not detention. Kids across the country are struggling under the constant threat of ICE. Children are being wrongfully deported. They deserve better.

We will never forget the nightmare this administration has inflicted on children across our country. It is going to leave an indelible mark, an evil mark. We must hold this administration and ICE accountable. We cannot accept anything less. Remember our own children.

Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that I have many friends on the other side, and I cherish their friendship. I pray with them on Thursdays. I know they love children. I know they love their own children. Yet, to allow this to happen is immoral, it is a crime, and we have to do something about this together.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentlewoman from Washington and the ranking member of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement (Ms. JAYAPAL).

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representatives DEXTER and TONKO for hosting this incredibly important Special Order hour.

Since Donald Trump was sworn in 14 months ago, DHS has terrorized our children. Every single day 50 U.S. citizen children have had a parent detained, on average, and over 11,000 American children in total. After Trump restarted the cruel practice of detaining families and children, ICE has jailed about 3,500 adults and children. That includes over 900 children jailed beyond the 20-day legal limit set by longstanding legal settlement.

More and more children are forced to appear in court alone as Trump has cut funding for legal representation. Let's talk about what this all looks like.

In Washington State, ICE arrested a mother dropping off her 4-year-old son at a preschool.

In Oregon, masked ICE agents broke the car windows and arrested a father dropping off his son at preschool.

In Chicago, ICE dragged a daycare worker out of the facility, slammed her face against the daycare's glass doors, and arrested her.

Recently, in Vermont, the community surrounded a home for hours as ICE sought to enter without a warrant. Demonstrators created a human tunnel allowing a 4-year-old child wrapped in a blanket to escape the home. Her mother was desperate to get her to safety.

This is horrifying. We can't talk about any of this without recognizing the toll on our educators and our daycare workers who are on the front lines doing everything they can to protect our children, even as many of them are immigrants as well and face threats to their own safety.

We have also seen Federal agents use physical violence and chemical weapons indiscriminately.

In Chicago, Border Patrol Commander Gregory Bovino deployed tear gas in a residential neighborhood as children were gathering for a Halloween parade. In the words of a Federal judge: These kids, their sense of safety was shattered, and it is going to take a long time for that to come back.

In Minneapolis, ICE deployed tear gas near a family in their car, causing a 6-month-old baby to stop breathing.

All of this leads to lasting trauma for our children, regardless of their immigration status or whether they have an immigrant parent or a family member.

Here is what Allison Bassett Ratto, a child clinical psychologist, has said about the harms to children: What they see are their classmates, their family members, and their neighbors often being apprehended in violent and confusing ways while doing things like picking up their children from the bus stop or going to their jobs. For children, this creates a sense that nowhere and no one is safe. The stress, the anxiety, and the trauma can become chronic, leading to both immediate and long-term damage to children's mental and physical health.

Tomorrow, as ranking member of the Immigration Subcommittee, I will be holding a hearing entitled: Trump's Assault on Our Children, and we will have legal and medical experts, educators, and directly impacted people who will testify to the harms and the trauma being caused to our children.

Donald Trump ran on going after the so-called worst of the worst. It has been very clear that this was never his intent. He made it clear that chaos and cruelty go hand in hand with mass deportation. It is inflicting lasting trauma on our children, regardless of immigration status.

Do not close your eyes. Do not close your eyes to this harm that our own government is inflicting on our children. Do not talk about Christian values or any other religious value and then traumatize our children.

Mr. Speaker, we will not stop fighting against this horror. We will not stop because it is our responsibility in this body to make sure that our government is not traumatizing these kids.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentlewoman from Arizona, Mrs. GRIJALVA.

Mrs. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, a 9-year-old boy named Deiver, told Ms. Rachel, a well-known online educator in a recent interview: Can you help us leave here? I don't want to be here anymore. I want to leave and go to the spelling bee.

This is so heartbreaking, cruel, and reprehensible. It shows the real harm caused by immigration policies pushed by Trump. The Republican Party isn't just watching. It is supporting, defending, and funding it. Our children, "our babies," "nuestros niños," are being locked in detention, separated from their families, and traumatized.

There are too many stories like Deiver's, and each one is a moral failure of our government and this administration. No family deserves this. No one deserves this.

Deiver has been released. But what about the hundreds of babies and children who haven't? Who will be torn from their parents next? Who will be disappeared next?

These children don't belong locked away in jails. They belong in classrooms. They belong at school, learning, dreaming, and preparing for spelling bees, not living in constant fear that they will be taken away from their family and friends, and disappeared.

How does locking up our babies make this country safer? This is not politics.

Mr. Speaker, this is a moral crisis, and it is on all of us, on every single one of us, to act.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. RIVAS.)

Ms. RIVAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman DEXTER and Congressman TONKO for hosting this conversation that shines a light on ICE's cruelty.

I have seen firsthand the cruelty of ICE in my district, the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles.

Last year, a mother and two children were detained at the Van Nuys Courthouse after a judge dismissed their asylum case. They were immediately taken by ICE and sent to the Dilley detention center in Texas. My casework team worked to release them from ICE custody and return them back to Van Nuys.

I am grateful for my team, for working to keep my constituents safe, and for helping to bring them home.

□ 1630

However, they never should have been in this position. My constituents were following the rules and obeying the laws, and ICE still took them and sent them to Texas to live in horrid conditions.

They were part of the over 68,000 people who have been in ICE detention, and the kids were part of the over 3,800 children booked into ICE custody.

ICE is terrorizing families and inflicting unspeakable harm on our most vulnerable. Despite all of this, Donald Trump and Republicans continue to refuse to hold ICE accountable. Children, parents, and our communities are

not safe if ICE continues to operate as is. To truly protect them, ICE must be abolished.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO).

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to cohost this Special Order with Congresswoman DEXTER. Again, I thank the gentlewoman for her caring voice.

Obviously, listening to these horrific stories that are impacting our children in this Nation is very difficult to absorb.

The Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement has increased its coordination with ICE. That partnership is very troublesome. It bothers me to think of what can happen. ORR is sharing data on prospective guardians for unaccompanied children with ICE, and then ICE is increasingly using these children as lures to detain family members.

Our children should not be used as pawns. This, as a civilized nation, has an image cast to the entire world. A civilized nation nurtures its children. A civilized nation respects its children. A civilized nation loves its children. Where is our moral compass here?

Beyond the impact on these children and families, beyond the hurt and the physical and mental damage, there is an image cast to the entire world. This uncivilized behavior is a scar on our history. It is one that indicates that unaccompanied children are now waiting an average of more than 200 days in ORR detention, despite the many, many family members who are ready and able to care for them.

That is more than double the highest average seen during the first Trump administration of some 93 days and, yes, more than six times as long as the 30-day average seen under the Biden administration.

The Office of Inspector General found that the longer that children remain in ORR custody, the more likely they are to exhibit mental health or behavioral issues.

Think about that. We are inflicting damage on children, innocent children escaping harm in their native land, perhaps, or asking just to live their version of the American Dream. Longer stays in ORR detention are leading to more instances of self-harm and suicidal ideation.

We can, and we must, do better.

Mr. Speaker, it is so important that these stories are shared this afternoon with the American public because they challenge us. They inspire us to respond, to reach out to our Representatives, and to speak to this government about the way that it is conducting itself in regard to children. They are not pawns. They should not be impacted so severely and have lifetime damage.

We are a better people than that. We are a better nation than that. We are proud as a country and should maintain that sense of pride by doing right,

by doing just, and by doing fair by all children, our children.

With that, I see we have been joined by another colleague.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. JACOBS).

Ms. JACOBS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today because our country has normalized something that should never be normal: locking up kids. Under the Trump administration, ICE has detained thousands of children, many of them under 5 years old.

As a Representative from San Diego, an immigrant and border community, I have seen firsthand the consequences of our immigration system. As someone who has spent my career working on human rights, I can tell you that this is state-sanctioned child abuse.

These children are not threats. They are not statistics. They are kids, some just babies and toddlers, who have fled violence, poverty, and instability. They have done nothing wrong. Many have experienced trauma before they ever set foot on American soil.

Instead of care and instead of compassion, we are detaining them and traumatizing them for life.

To be honest, I don't actually care what their parents may or may not have done. Children should not be punished for their parents' actions.

Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago, I went to the Dilley immigration detention center in Texas, the primary site for family detention in our country. What I saw and what I heard would rattle any parent, and it should disturb everyone.

Kids have nightmares so bad that they wake up screaming in the middle of the night. Teenagers are regressing developmentally and wetting the bed. The classrooms were empty. The playground was empty. There was no joy or laughter, just the look of fear and despair in people's eyes.

The mom of a 3-year-old told me that her daughter was anxious and depressed, but the nurse said that she was fine because she hadn't lost too much weight yet, so they didn't help her.

This kind of fear and uncertainty doesn't just go away. It will follow these kids. It will shape their development and leave lasting scars.

This isn't just my observation. The American Academy of Pediatrics has said for years that detaining children causes toxic stress that can permanently alter brain development. Pediatricians call it institutional harm.

When medical professionals are telling us that what we are doing to these kids causes the same neurological damage as physical abuse, we need to stop calling it immigration policy and start calling it for what it is.

I know immigration is complicated. I know that there are strong opinions on all sides of this issue, but protecting children should not be controversial. Ensuring that children are treated with dignity and care should not be political or partisan. Apparently, it is be-

cause the Republican Party, the so-called profamily party, is complicit in child abuse.

I won't be complicit. My colleagues and I will not be complicit. We need to shut down Dilley and end family detention for good. We need to reject the idea that locking up children and their parents is an acceptable response to migration.

That means Congress needs to do its job and cut off funding for family detention and claw back the \$75 billion blank check that was given to ICE and Border Patrol.

While we are at it, not a single committee in this House has held a hearing on conditions inside family detention facilities, not one. Republicans control every gavel in this building, and they have conducted zero oversight of what is being done to children in our government's custody. If they won't do oversight, we will. When we have the majority, Dilley will be the first place we go.

Many of us in this Chamber have children of our own. While I don't have kids yet, I wouldn't be able to live with myself and look my four nieces and nephews in the eyes if I weren't doing everything in my power to protect all kids.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to look their kids in their eyes tonight and imagine them locked up in these conditions, and then work with us to end family detention.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Congresswoman DEXTER for her leadership on this issue.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I spent 20 years taking care of the sickest members of our community as a critical care and pulmonary physician. I have seen what happens when people aren't able to get the care that they need: Preventable illnesses escalate and become deadly.

At Dilley, there have been repeated reports of children's medical needs not being met, resulting in life-threatening health problems. That includes a 2-year-old with infected gums that Dilley staff did not treat for over 23 days, leading her to have a fever and infection, cry relentlessly, and be forced to have a diet of only liquids.

□ 1640

It includes an 18-month-old baby who went to the hospital for 10 days when her oxygen levels were dangerously low and a 10-year-old child with Hirschsprung's disease who lacked proper medical care, resulting in no bowel movements for over a month.

Families report something even more disturbing. When they ask for help, they are dismissed, belittled, and mocked. One person reported that they were laughed at by guards while vomiting and pleading to see a doctor.

If any hospital in this country treated children this way, we would shut it down. We would investigate. We would hold people accountable. Instead, our tax dollars are funding it. It is reprehensible.

I call on my colleagues for an immediate end to cruel immigration enforcement against children. Defund and dismantle ICE.

Mr. Speaker, I yield again to the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO).

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, again, I appreciate the opportunity for all of us to share our thoughts here this afternoon.

I am reminded that ICE has been re-detaining children who were previously approved to stay with family members. It seems as though cruel has to be the additive to all of these actions. It is not enough to take that first step and then re-detain and then sponsors are being asked to provide additional information, including fingerprints and DNA.

So there is an all-out attempt to dismantle the peace and tranquility of so many families and to make, again, children, pawns in this process.

Discharges to sponsors have declined dramatically. Over 5,000 unaccompanied children were released to an individual sponsor back in January of 2025. What does that number look like now? In April, that number dropped to just 45. So, again, the cruelty continues.

We see on the news every day the plummeting of the Trump administration's popularity, and that is pretty much earned. America disrespects the kind of behavior that is the hallmark of this administration—creating trauma amongst children and parents. They must end cruel immigration enforcement against kids now.

I know that we have been joined by our colleague from Texas now to hear his story.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I am going to give my colleague just a moment and tell you about a family who are not immigrants with children. They are Americans, four Americans. Jackie Merlos and her children went to the Canadian border with her mother, who had a visiting visa from Honduras to come and see her sister and her nieces and nephews who live in Canada as permanent legal residents.

They drove to the Peace Park. They went there to have a family reunion, a picnic. There was no intention for any misguided actions. They just wanted to have a picnic and a reunion.

Now, Jackie has an asylum case, an active asylum case. She has lived in the United States for over 20 years and has an active work permit. She has done everything right. As they hugged, ICE agents, CBP agents swarmed the family and detained all of them.

Now, luckily, her sister lives in Canada where they released her fairly quickly, but Jackie was accused of human trafficking, as if her sister and her nieces and nephews wanted to come into the United States. She was kept with her four children, 7-year-old triplets and their 9-year-old, in a windowless cell at the border in Fern-dale, Washington, for 2 weeks—over 2 weeks.

This is not a facility meant for long-term detention. It is a facility meant

for 48-hours-or-less stays. There are no showers. There is no kitchen to make food for them. They kept them there.

I had the ability to go and see this family, but I wasn't allowed to talk to them. We were told that they were being sent back home and that Jackie had asked for that. It was a lie. Jackie had never signed any paperwork. She has four U.S. children. She knew she had done everything right, and she refused. But we were lied to. I, as a U.S. Congresswoman, was lied to.

Eventually, we had a habeas corpus case, and Jackie was released. Her children had been released as they were about to deport them.

Let me also say that her husband was taken into detention after her children were questioned individually, without their mother there, by CBP agents. They asked where they live and how much money do they make. Their father was detained from their own home. He was detained to the Northwest Detention Center.

While he was there, Customs and Border Patrol took pictures of the children and took them to their father and asked: Is this your child? They had him sign something. Well, he was signing passport applications. He reads Spanish. The applications were in English.

Our government was trying to deport, which isn't really a thing at all, American citizens against the will of their parents, and they lied to a U.S. Congresswoman about whether or not they wanted to be sent home. They wouldn't allow me to see Jackie. They wouldn't let me talk to her. They absolutely were on the border, the fringe of sending them. They were at SeaTac Airport being sent when we finally got them to cease and desist.

This is what your taxpayer dollars are paying for. These are U.S. citizen children with a mother who had done everything right. Shame on us. This has to stop.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CASTRO).

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Congresswoman for yielding.

We have seen and we have witnessed the brutality on the streets of America by ICE. We saw two Americans killed, and many people brutalized.

Just the other day, in the San Francisco Airport, we saw a mother who was ripped away from her 9-year-old daughter. We saw that replayed in courthouses across the country, in neighborhoods, in cities across America. We have seen that mostly on television or social media as people have posted it up.

There is another brutality that most Americans have not gotten a chance to see that Congresswoman DEXTER and I have witnessed, that only Members of Congress and a few others have had a chance to see. It is also a brutality by ICE. It is the way that children and families are treated at the Dilley trailer prison in Dilley, Texas.

I have been there multiple times now, and I have seen the suffering of

the young kids who will be traumatized for life. As you know, they have talked about worms in their food, about being separated from a parent. There are some there who have no clue why they are there.

Dilley is unique in America in that I can't think of another place where you would imprison a 5-year-old boy like Liam Ramos who has committed no crime.

During this discussion and this debate about these prisons, there has been a temptation to direct the anger at ICE and at the people that work there, and I certainly understand that. But there is another group of people that we don't talk about much who are making millions, if not billions of dollars off of child suffering. As a country, we have made a decision to commodify child suffering, to allow investors to profit from child imprisonment, innocent child imprisonment.

□ 1650

There was a baby at Dilley that was 2 months old. The first time I went there I asked who the youngest child was, and I was told a 2-month old baby. Some of the largest asset managers, BlackRock, Vanguard have stakes in these private prison companies in CoreCivic that runs Dilley or GO that ran the south Texas ICE processing center where we visited several weeks ago.

We have to shut down the Dilley Detention Center, that trailer prison that has done so much damage to the kids and to the families who are there, kids like the mariachi boys who came to this Capitol at the invitation of their Congresswoman and performed their mariachi music, toured the White House, and yet, along with their parents were thrown into this trailer prison in Dilley.

Fortunately, because of an ensemble effort and so many Americans that spoke up, Members of Congress that spoke up, this wonderful group of pediatric doctors, mostly women who have been very active in pleading people's cases, they were released. Also, fortunately, at Dilley the first time I went there in January there were 1,100 people there. The next time there were 450 people. On Monday, there were only 102 people still at the Dilley trailer prison.

Keep speaking up. We need to shut Dilley down.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I again thank all of my colleagues who joined us today and who spoke with such clarity and urgency. What we heard this afternoon makes one thing clear: Immigration enforcement against children is inhumane and unnecessary.

Families can and should be able to navigate their immigration cases together and in community, with the support of loved ones and legal service providers.

Detention harms children. It harms their physical health. It harms their mental health. Even after they are released, that trauma stays with them for life.

For so many children, the harm starts long before detention ever happens. It starts with fear.

For months now, every single school group that has come into my office or that I have visited has raised ICE as one of its top concerns. Elementary students, middle schoolers, high schoolers, even college students, for all of them, ICE is their top concern.

At a time when teachers aren't getting paid enough, and the Department of Education is getting gutted, young people are coming to Congress and asking: How can we stop our friends from being taken away?

This administration is traumatizing an entire generation. That is why we are here today to call for an end to cruel immigration enforcement against children.

End child detention. Defund and dismantle ICE, and save our children from this nightmare.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on a moral crisis unfolding in our country. One that demands the attention of my Republican colleagues and the American people.

Last month, in Portland, Oregon, a seven-year-old girl was detained outside an urgent care clinic while her family sought medical help. Just weeks earlier, a five-year-old was detained while walking home from school in Columbia Heights, Minnesota. These are not isolated incidents. These are children, frightened, vulnerable, and in need of care, caught in an indiscriminate immigration enforcement dragnet.

After their arrests, both children were transferred with their families to the Dilley Family Detention Center in Texas, where reports detail inadequate medical care, limited drinking water, poor nutrition, and little access to education. These are conditions no child should endure, let alone in the custody of the United States government.

Although public outcry and legal intervention led to their release, hundreds of other children remain detained. Many are held for months—over 180 days on average—in facilities never designed for long-term care. They suffer deep psychological harm: anxiety, depression, and trauma compounded by separation and uncertainty.

Policies implemented through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) are now effectively prolonging detention. Barriers to family reunification, like invasive sponsor requirements and information-sharing with enforcement agencies, trap children in custody, often indefinitely. Some are even pressured to abandon their legal rights and return to dangerous conditions.

This is not who we are. Children seeking safety should not be treated as enforcement targets. They should be protected, cared for, and given a fair chance to pursue their legal rights.

Congress must act. We must conduct oversight, end family detention, restore due process protections, and ensure children are placed in the least restrictive settings.

History will judge us not by our rhetoric, but by whether we chose compassion over cruelty. Let us choose wisely.

#### SHARIA-FREE AMERICA

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Mr. SELF of Texas was recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SELF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. SELF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleagues from the Sharia-Free America Caucus, which my good friend and fellow Texan Congressman CHIP ROY and I proudly co-chair.

Just today, we added our 60th member. I am delighted to announce that the caucus now has representation from 25 States across the United States, which is half of all the States in this Union.

America was founded on a timeless principle, individual freedom secured by self-government under our clear and supreme rule of constitutional law.

As John Adams warned: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

Today, we witness the painful truth of those words. Multitudes arrive at our borders with no intention of assimilating into our culture or embracing the founding principles of liberty under the U.S. Constitution.

The clash is not new. In 1786, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams asked the Ambassador from Tripoli why his nation attacked peaceful countries with no provocation. He replied that it was their right and duty under their laws of the prophet and the Koran to make war on all who do not acknowledge Islamic authority to enslave prisoners and that every fighter slain would go to paradise.

This was then and remains today a stark contrast of civilizations, one rooted in submission and domination, the other in individual liberty under constitutional law.

Sharia poses a unique and profound danger. It is far more than a personal faith. It is a comprehensive system of governance, culture, and domination that enforces submission through violence.

All cultures are not morally equivalent. Whereas, Christianity is the religion of peace, reconciliation, and love, Islam is a religion of the sword. It stands in direct irreconcilable conflict with a maximum individual freedom at the heart of Western civilization and our Judeo-Christian heritage.

Our rights derive from our creator, not from any man-made supremacist code. America gladly welcomes those who come to assimilate and worship freely according to conscience, but we

must never accommodate a system that demands the submission of every surrounding society. And sharia explicitly requires precisely that.

The evidence is mounting right here in my home State, the Lone Star State. In my own Congressional District, Texas' Third District, the East Plano Islamic Center, one of the largest mosques in north Texas, already operates a sharia-adherent enclave in Plano. This is not merely a house of worship. It serves as the foundation for something far more troubling.

The same organization spearheaded a proposed 400-plus acre residential development in unincorporated Collin and Hunt Counties near Josephine originally called EPIC City now rebranded as The Meadow to deflect scrutiny and confusion over its separatist intent.

Marketed as a Muslim-centric community, it was designed around sharia-adherent living, over 1,000 homes, a new mosque, a K-12 school, and other facilities tailored to enforce submission rather than assimilation.

Both the existing EPIC enclave and this affiliated project are abominations that threaten American principles of equality, individual liberty, and the rule of law.

We have seen alarming incidents of Muslim intimidation. An imam in Dallas called the police on a fellow Muslim for merely speaking to a Christian pastor. Another in Houston captured on video threatening to occupy non-compliant businesses under sharia.

Texas is seeing explosive growth with roughly 48 new mosques in just the last 2 years.

That is why on March 3, Texas Republicans overwhelmingly passed proposition 10 with 95 percent support, a clear mandate to ban sharia in our State.

Texans have spoken: American law only. No foreign ideology should make Americans feel like foreigners in their own country. Texas stands as ground zero in this fight. Yet, this is not just a Texas issue. Sharia's influence is advancing from Arizona to Minnesota to Alabama, Florida, and beyond. No State is immune. That is why our caucus has surged to 60 members across 25 States bolstered by strong Senate support from figures like Senator TUBERVILLE.

As I have said repeatedly, sharia has no place in America. Do not sharia our America. Defend the West. Ban sharia.

The urgency of this fight was laid bare in the opening days of March when a disturbing wave of Islamist-inspired attacks struck our soil. On March 1, in Austin, a gunman opened fire outside a downtown bar, killing three innocent young Americans and wounding more than a dozen others. The Islamist terrorist, a naturalized citizen from Senegal with prior arrests, wore a sweatshirt proclaiming: "Property of Allah," an undershirt bearing an Iranian flag, and left a Koran in his vehicle.