

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

December 20, 2022

Mr. Tae Johnson  
Acting Director  
United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Acting Director Johnson:

We write today to express deep concern about recent reports our offices have received that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will soon transport busloads of illegal immigrants to Tennessee.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, we have learned that the New Orleans ICE field office has been working in coordination with the Tennessee Immigration and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC), a left-wing immigration advocacy group, to bus these immigrants to Tennessee. We have learned that as many as 50 single-adult, detained illegal immigrants could be bused to Tennessee at a time, with the possibility of multiple busloads each week. Further, these individuals would be released into Tennessee while they await court proceedings. Given the previous instances of ICE busing immigrants to Tennessee without notice,<sup>2</sup> we are very troubled by these new reports and request that you provide more information about this situation.

The crisis unfolding at our southern border underscores the troubling nature of these reports. Under the Biden Administration's watch, there have been record encounters at the border. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents encountered nearly 2.4 million illegal immigrants in fiscal year 2022, far exceeding the 1.7 million encounters in 2021.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, in 2022, border agents detained 98 individuals who were on the terrorist watchlist.<sup>4</sup> With Title 42—the only effective enforcement tool left in place—on the cusp of expiring, it is abundantly clear that the situation at our southern border is out of control and worsening by the day. Moreover, with these record encounters, the American people cannot be certain who these individuals are that are entering our country illegally. With that in mind, it is deeply concerning that these same individuals will be released into Tennessee.

By terminating successful Trump-era immigration policies like Remain in Mexico, the Biden Administration is directly responsible for this crisis at the border, and it is unacceptable that President Biden has decided to impose his manufactured crisis onto the people of Tennessee. It is

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<sup>1</sup> Kyle Morris & Andrew Murray, *ICE Plans to Release Illegal Immigrants in Tennessee to Await Court Proceedings, Governor Says*, FOX NEWS (Dec. 20, 2022 12:21 PM), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/ice-plans-release-illegal-immigrants-tennessee-court-proceedings-governor-says>.

<sup>2</sup> Maggie LaMere, *Asylum Seekers Arrive in Tennessee*, FOX17 (Aug. 13, 2022), <https://fox17.com/news/local/asylum-seekers-arrive-in-tennessee>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION, CBP ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/cbp-enforcement-statistics>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

therefore imperative that you provide us—and the people of Tennessee—with more information about this situation.

Please provide responses to the following questions by December 27, 2022:

1. When do you anticipate that ICE will begin busing these illegal immigrants to Tennessee? Where in Tennessee do you expect to drop off these individuals?
2. Can you confirm that as many as 50 illegal immigrants could be bused to Tennessee at a time, with the possibility of multiple busloads per week?
3. Will these illegal immigrants have undergone any vetting procedures prior to being released into Tennessee? If so, please provide specific details about these procedures and the kind of background information you have obtained.
4. Has the Department of Homeland Security properly filed Notices to Appear for each of these illegal immigrants? If not, does the Department intend to do so? If not, why not?
5. Can you guarantee that none of these individuals being transported to Tennessee are convicted criminals or are on the Terrorist Screening Dataset?
6. When did the New Orleans ICE field office begin coordination with TIRRC about transporting these illegal immigrants to Tennessee?

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator



Bill Hagerty  
United States Senator

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
United States Department of Homeland Security

Ragan Lewis  
Assistant Field Office Director  
United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, New Orleans Field Office