

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20528

Mr. Todd Lyons  
Acting Director  
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
500 12th St SW  
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Secretary Mullin and Director Lyons:

We write to express our strong opposition, along with that of local officials and residents, to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) plans to open a large-scale detention facility in Social Circle, Georgia. We ask that ICE abandon its plans to open a detention center over the objections of the community. If ICE takes the indefensible position of proceeding despite overwhelming local opposition and the obvious unsuitability of this siting decision, we demand that: (1) ICE brief the Mayor, City Manager, and City Engineer of Social Circle, along with our staff, on its specific plans to address all infrastructure and safety issues prior to the commencement of any construction or renovation on the property, and (2) ICE fully address all infrastructure and safety issues, both to the satisfaction of local officials and in accordance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, prior to any detainees being housed at the property.

Social Circle is a small town in northern Georgia with fewer than 5,500 residents.<sup>1</sup> In February 2026, ICE purchased a one-million-square-foot warehouse in Social Circle for \$128.6 million from PNK S1, LLC.<sup>2</sup> The warehouse will serve as a large-scale detention center and house between 7,500 and 10,000 detainees.<sup>3</sup>

In lieu of any communication or coordination from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the City of Social Circle learned of ICE's decision to triple its population and build a detention center—larger than the largest federal prison, state prison, or current ICE facility<sup>4</sup>—via a Washington Post article.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Demographics*, City of Social Circle, <https://www.socialcirclega.gov/about-us/demographics> (last visited Mar. 22, 2026).

<sup>2</sup> Evan Newton, *Feds Paid Over \$128.5 Million for New Social Circle ICE Facility, Deed Shows*, Covington News (Feb. 10, 2026), <https://www.covnews.com/news/cities/feds-paid-over-1285-million-new-ice-facility-deed-shows>.

<sup>3</sup> *Updated Statement Regarding ICE Detention Facility 2/18/2026*, City of Social Circle (Feb. 18, 2026), <https://www.socialcirclega.gov/Home/Components/News/News/241/16>.

<sup>4</sup> *FCI Fort Dix*, Federal Bureau of Prisons, <https://www.bop.gov/locations/institutions/ftd> (last visited Mar. 22, 2026) (housing 4,016 total inmates); *Demographic Dashboard for Website*, Louisiana Department of Public Safety & Corrections (Jan. 31, 2026), <https://doc.la.gov/demographic-dashboard> (listing a current population of 4,352 inmates at Louisiana State Penitentiary); *FY 2026 ICE Statistics*, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Feb. 12, 2026), <https://www.ice.gov/detain/detention-management> (identifying ERO El Paso Camp East Montana as the largest active ICE facility, with 2,954 total detainees).

<sup>5</sup> Douglas MacMillan and Jonathan O'Connell, *ICE Documents Reveal Plan to Hold 80,000 Immigrants in Warehouses*, Washington Post (Dec. 24, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/12/24/ice-immigrants-detention-warehouses-deportation-trump>.

Since learning of this alarming development, local officials have expressed their opposition and concern regarding the proposed detention center. In particular, they have questioned whether the City's water and wastewater systems can accommodate the large influx of people and corresponding demands from the detention center:

- According to DHS, the detention center will generate 1,001,683 gallons per day (gpd) of wastewater.<sup>6</sup> Currently, Social Circle is only permitted to process 650,000 gpd and is already operating near capacity.<sup>7</sup>
- Similarly, engineers contracted by the City project that the detention center's drinking water demand will exceed 1.1 million gpd.<sup>8</sup> According to local leaders, Social Circle's water treatment plant is permitted to treat 1 million gpd, with current peak demands of approximately 800,000 gpd.<sup>9</sup> The new demand from the detention center will far outpace the City's permitted and available drinking water supply, resulting in widespread outages for residents.

None of the measures that DHS has suggested are adequate to address the scale of the problem. As conveyed to our offices by local leaders and DHS staff:

- In various documents and conversations, DHS has suggested using water and wastewater infrastructure from the neighboring Newton and Clayton counties.<sup>10</sup> However, neither Newton County, Clayton County, nor Walton County services Social Circle, and Newton County is already facing its own water shortage issues.<sup>11</sup>
- DHS has also suggested that it will truck off the byproducts of wastewater treatment, namely effluent and solid waste. However, DHS has not identified any site permitted or willing to receive such byproducts.
- DHS has similarly speculated that it will truck in drinking water without any plan as to what entity will supply the significant drinking water needs of 10,000 people.
- Moreover, this plan to use trucks to transport drinking water and waste byproducts for a population that is double the number of Social Circle's existing residents will add significant traffic and deterioration to its roads, potentially leading to safety hazards.

In total, the City of Social Circle estimates that constructing the water and wastewater infrastructure necessary to support a detention center of this size will cost \$44 million and take at

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<sup>6</sup> City of Social Circle, *supra* note 3.

<sup>7</sup> An infrastructure analysis prepared for the City of Social Circle indicates that, at current flow levels, the City has 250,000 gpd of excess capacity—less than one-fourth of what a detention center of this size will require. Kenneth E. Green, *Social Circle BLUF Response*, Turnipseed Engineers (Feb. 26, 2026), at 2 (PDF attached).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 2.

<sup>10</sup> Jim Grossman, *BLUF, Social Circle Discussions, Conversion of Large Facility to Detention Center* (shared by DHS with Social Circle),

<https://www.socialcirclega.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/1522/639070371368600000> (referencing the “A. Scott Emmons Water Reclamation Facility,” which is located in Newton County, on page 2, and the “Clayton County Water Authority,” which is located in Clayton County, on page 3).

<sup>11</sup> Social Circle lies within Walton County, but Walton County does not operate Social Circle's water infrastructure and has not connected its infrastructure to Social Circle's system. *See also* Eli Tan, *Their Water Taps Ran Dry When Meta Built Next Door*, New York Times (Jul. 14, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/14/technology/meta-data-center-water.html> (noting that “Newton County is on track to be in a water deficit by 2030,” with water rates set to increase 33% due to the shortage).

least 28 months (with an estimated completion date of Quarter 2 of 2028).<sup>12</sup> Building this new infrastructure will require new permitting and significant investment that has neither been planned for nor provided by DHS or local officials.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the City's water and wastewater infrastructure constraints, Social Circle officials and residents have expressed concerns regarding safety and security. The detention center will be located directly adjacent to several residential properties, less than 1,000 feet away from a Walton County residential subdivision, and less than a mile away from Social Circle Elementary School.<sup>14</sup> As a result, school officials and parents are concerned about the safety of the 1,100 children enrolled at the elementary school, whose school environment may be adversely affected by a detention center located in such close proximity. This proximity to sensitive locations is especially troubling given Social Circle's limited law enforcement resources. With a local police force of only 15 officers on patrol, it is unclear how Social Circle will be able to manage any safety concerns that may arise when the detention center effectively triples the City's population.<sup>15</sup> Similar uncertainties exist with respect to emergency medical services (EMS) due to Social Circle's modest EMS capacity and DHS' nebulous plan for emergency transport at the detention center.<sup>16</sup>

Given these pressing concerns, we ask that ICE abandon its plans to open a detention center in Social Circle over the objections of the community. If ICE takes the indefensible position of proceeding despite overwhelming local opposition and the obvious unsuitability of this siting decision, we demand that: (1) ICE brief the Mayor, City Manager, and City Engineer of Social Circle, along with our staff, on its specific plans to address all infrastructure and safety issues prior to the commencement of any construction or renovation on the property, and (2) ICE fully address all infrastructure and safety issues, both to the satisfaction of local officials and in accordance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, prior to any detainees being housed at the property.

Additionally, while we appreciate your staff's willingness to speak to our offices about the facility, we also ask that you respond to the following remaining questions by April 7, 2026.

### *Infrastructure*

1. Please provide a comprehensive plan that outlines how ICE will meet the drinking water needs of the detention center in Social Circle. Please identify the specific sources of water and water infrastructure that ICE will use as well as the measures ICE will take to ensure that the facility does not burden the residents of Social Circle or the surrounding communities. If such a plan is not available to share, please state the anticipated timeline for providing this plan.
  - a. If ICE plans to use a cistern on-site to draw drinking water during off-peak hours, please describe how ICE will address the City of Social Circle's concern that the detention center's drinking water demand will exceed the City's supply, regardless of the use of a cistern during off-peak hours.

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<sup>12</sup> Green, *supra* note 7, at 2.

<sup>13</sup> City of Social Circle, *supra* note 3.

<sup>14</sup> Staff Conversation with Eric Taylor, City Manager of Social Circle (Mar. 6, 2026).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> Staff Conversation with Social Circle City Officials (Feb. 19, 2026).

- b. If ICE plans to truck in additional drinking water, please identify from where ICE plans to obtain this drinking water, whether agreements are in place to supply that water, the expected daily number of truck trips required to transport the necessary volume of water, the expected average weight of each truck, and an analysis of the effects of this additional truck traffic on traffic, road, and safety conditions in Social Circle.
    - c. If ICE plans to drill private wells on the property, please identify ICE's estimate of how many wells will be used and what amount of water will be procured, and please describe how ICE plans to address concerns that the required number of wells is unlikely to be sustainable or permitted.
  2. Please provide a comprehensive plan that outlines how ICE will meet the wastewater needs of the detention center in Social Circle. Please identify the specific resources that ICE will use and the measures that ICE will take to ensure that the facility does not burden the residents of Social Circle or the surrounding communities. If such a plan is not available to share, please state the anticipated timeline for providing this plan.
    - a. If ICE plans to process wastewater on-site, please describe how ICE will address the City of Social Circle's concern that the detention center's wastewater demand will exceed the City's capacity and discharge permits.
    - b. If ICE plans to process wastewater on-site, please identify where the effluent and solid waste will be stored and state whether all necessary permits have been obtained.
    - c. If ICE plans to truck out the effluent and solid waste, please identify the expected daily number of truck trips required to transport these byproducts, the expected average weight of each truck, and an analysis of the effects of this additional truck traffic on traffic, road, and safety conditions in Social Circle.
  3. Please provide a copy of all documents produced during the due diligence and planning process for the detention center in Social Circle, including but not limited to:
    - a. Any infrastructure impact assessment besides the Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF) Report;
    - b. Any documents that informed the BLUF Report;
    - c. Documents prepared or developed pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), including any proposal to take a major federal action, Categorical Exclusion Determination, Environmental Assessment, Finding of No Significant Impact, Environmental Impact Statement, Record of Decision, or any other such document required pursuant to NEPA;
    - d. The Phase 1 environmental site assessment;
    - e. The economic impact analysis for the facility; and
    - f. Any public input received regarding the facility.

#### *Security and Emergency Response*

4. Please provide the anticipated number of personnel that will be responsible for security at the detention center in Social Circle.
5. What procedures will ICE follow if a security incident occurs at the detention center?
  - a. How will ICE coordinate with state and local law enforcement if such an incident occurs?

- b. How will ICE work with local fire and emergency management services if such an incident occurs?
6. What specific measures will ICE take to handle major medical emergencies? What burden will this have on regional hospitals? Has ICE contacted local hospitals to discuss the potential burdens and what steps ICE will take to resolve them?
7. What specific security measures will ICE implement to ensure resident safety at nearby residential and educational locations, including Social Circle Elementary School?
8. What specific privacy measures will ICE implement to prevent the federal surveillance of Social Circle residents, and particularly the students at Social Circle Elementary School, as part of the detention center's security operations?

*Expected Timelines*

8. Please confirm that no detainees will be housed at the detention center in Social Circle until (1) the City of Social Circle confirms that its local infrastructure can accommodate the facility's resource demands and (2) all required state and local permits have been issued for the facility.
9. Please share the anticipated timeline for when the detention center in Social Circle will begin to house detainees and how the detainee population will ramp up to full capacity.

We look forward to your prompt response. Enclosed is a report from Turnipseed Engineers that provides an analysis of the infrastructure capacity in Social Circle, a letter from the City Manager of Social Circle outlining the City's concerns, and several documents describing Social Circle's current permitting capabilities.

Sincerely,



Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff  
United States Senator

CC: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of the Chief Facilities & Security Officer

**Appendix**

- A. City's Response to ICE BLUF (Turnipseed Engineers)
- B. City of Social Circle Letter to DHS (March 9, 2026)
- C. Social Circle Permitting Documents