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*New Mexicans Denounce Privately Run Prisons in New Mexico
Courts, Corrections and Justice Committee of the New Mexico Legislature
hearing on immigrant prisons in New Mexico*

SANTA FE, NM - On Monday, July 16th at 1:00 PM, immigrant-based organizations, civil rights advocacy groups, and concerned New Mexicans spoke out at the Courts, Corrections and Justice Committee of the New Mexico Legislature to advocate for the end of *all* privately run detention centers and prisons in New Mexico.

The criminalization, targeting, persecution, and detention of immigrants by the Trump administration is making billions of dollars for corporations on the backs of immigrants and communities of color.

Over the past decades, there has been an alarming increase in the involvement and influence of the private prison industry in U.S. immigration enforcement. According to the [Migration Institute](#), as of 2016, nearly three-fourths of the average daily immigration detainee population was held in facilities operated by private companies. According to the same report, corporations such as CoreCivic, Inc. and GEO Group, Inc.—which collectively manage more than half of private prison contracts in the country (including immigration and non-immigration detention)—earned combined revenue exceeding \$4 billion in FY 2017.

According to the 2015 report of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, New Mexico incarcerates a higher percentage of inmates, 42 percent in privately run, for-profit prisons.

The Cibola County Correctional Center, run by CoreCivic, formerly Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), was shut down in August 2016 by the Bureau of Prisons due to a [history of medical](#) neglect that led to multiple deaths. In October 2016, the same company opened the Cibola private detention center after repurposing the 1,129-bed Cibola County Correctional Center into an ICE detention center. Although CoreCivic reportedly receives \$2.5 million per month to house anywhere between zero and 848 detainees at the prison, Cibola County receives a meager .50 cents per detainee per day.

Currently, CoreCivic operates nine other detention centers and at least three other prisons in the nation under contract with the U.S. Marshals Service. Another privately run detention center for immigrants is the Otero County Processing Center located in Chaparral, New Mexico where many immigrant men and fathers are currently detained. The Office of Inspector General released a [report](#) in December 2017 denouncing the staff's abusive behavior and neglect, lack of proper medical attention, excessive use of solitary confinement and unsanitary conditions under which detainees were living.

Hilaria Martinez, an immigrant mother, worker, and an active member of El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos, an Albuquerque-based immigrants' rights and workers' justice organization speaks on the impact that private and privately run detention centers have on New Mexican families, "My husband was detained by ICE in the detention center in Otero County. To this day, my husband wakes up scared thinking that he is still inside a detention center suffering cold, hunger, thirst, and abuse. My youngest daughter sleeps holding hands with my husband because she fears to lose him again. I ask you today to fight for New Mexico families by taking a stand against the profit being made off our families by privately run detention centers and prisons. New Mexico should serve as a model in the nation."

Justin Remer-Thamert, Executive Director of New Mexico Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice expressed, "As people of faith, we strive to lose the chains of injustice for those under the yoke of oppression. For this reason, we stand against immigration detention in our community, which rips families apart and disregards the dignity of our immigrant neighbors."

A National Immigration Justice Center (NIJC) survey of legal service providers in 2017 reveals that New Mexico immigration attorneys, at their maximum capacity, are only able to represent approximately 42 detained individuals at the detention centers in New Mexico at any given time — six percent of the jail's population in April 2017.

María Martínez Sánchez, staff attorney, ACLU of New Mexico, "The horrific treatment of federal civil detainees in privately run prisons is a stain on our great state. New Mexico has a strong and proud tradition of being ahead of the curve in protecting the constitutional rights of the people within our state's borders, with no exceptions depending on an individual's national origin. It is up to us as a state to step in where the federal government will not to protect the lives of migrants incarcerated in these facilities. To continue to allow them to operate unsupervised and with impunity is to acquiesce to grave violations of rights against a vulnerable population."

Roberto Gonzalez, immigrant father and community leader with NM Comunidades en Acción y de Fe (CAFe), a Southern NM faith-based organization, "This year, after an unfortunate experience with my local police department, I spent 3 months in the detention center in Otero County. I can still recall my time at the detention center, feeling like my humanity had been stripped from me. I suffered and witnessed terrible conditions that I would wish upon no one. As a man of faith, I cannot think of anything more sinful than profiting off the suffering of others. As I fight my case today to stay with my family, I urge legislators to also fight for our families by ending these detention centers that are profiting off our pain."

Adriel Orozco, attorney at the New Mexico Immigrant Law Center, "Today, the New Mexico legislature is taking an important step toward shining more light on the for-profit immigrant detention system that is not only serving to tear New Mexico families apart, but is being used by the federal government as a tool to deter asylum seekers from coming to the U.S.. We know that the Cibola County Correctional Center and the Otero County Processing Center have long-standing and well-documented histories of abuse and medical neglect. Our state now has the opportunity to stand firmly on the right side of history and put an end to these abusive practices."