

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2026

The Honorable David J. Venturella
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Acting Director Venturella:

I am writing to seek information regarding serious risks to public safety, law enforcement, and national security posed by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents who reportedly were hired without basic vetting. New disclosures, reportedly from an ICE unit chief, underscore grave concerns that the agency has hired and deployed armed agents in communities across the country who lack the training and temperament to serve in law enforcement and who, in some cases, may pose serious danger to members of the public.

According to new reporting by the *New York Times*, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General (DHS OIG) received a whistleblower complaint in August 2025 that included allegations that ICE was cutting corners, violating the law, and fast-tracking unqualified candidates who had not completed background checks.¹ The source of the complaint was an ICE unit chief with 17 years of experience who supervised more than 100 employees responsible for vetting applicants. He detailed an “unprecedented lowering of standards” and “systemic breakdowns” that ultimately could expose the agency to “grave national security risks.”² In addition, the unit chief raised concerns about Department of Homeland Security (DHS) political appointees – including Corey Lewandowski – receiving favorable treatment during the security clearance process despite troubling information in background checks.³ According to the unit chief, a memo from the DHS head of security had included allegations that Mr. Lewandowski had been paid by a Chinese government agency, further adding to concerns that I continue to investigate about his conduct while at DHS.⁴

¹ *ICE Skipped Basic Checks in Rush for Recruits, Whistle-Blower Says*, New York Times (Sept. 3, 2026) (www.nytimes.com/2026/09/03/us/ice-recruits-national-security-risk-whistleblower.html).

² *ICE Skipped Basic Checks in Rush for Recruits, Whistle-Blower Says*, New York Times (Sept. 3, 2026) (www.nytimes.com/2026/09/03/us/ice-recruits-national-security-risk-whistleblower.html).

³ *ICE Skipped Basic Checks in Rush for Recruits, Whistle-Blower Says*, New York Times (Sept. 3, 2026) (www.nytimes.com/2026/09/03/us/ice-recruits-national-security-risk-whistleblower.html).

⁴ *ICE Skipped Basic Checks in Rush for Recruits, Whistle-Blower Says*, New York Times (Sept. 3, 2026) (www.nytimes.com/2026/09/03/us/ice-recruits-national-security-risk-whistleblower.html).

ICE has reportedly also struggled to prevent criminal organizations from embedding themselves within the agency. For example, *Reuters* reported in February 2026 that two ICE recruits were flagged as suspected MS-13 members after they had already been hired and sent to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers academy in Georgia, but only because of visible gang tattoos.⁵ Such lapses can have catastrophic consequences. Not only could criminals improperly occupy positions of power and authority as law enforcement officers, but they could also potentially ascertain and reveal the identity of confidential informants who are working with law enforcement, or even undercover law enforcement officers who are working to take down criminal organizations. Potential breaches of this nature could be deadly. As one former ICE instructor stated, “the thing that I think kept some of the other instructors up at night was the possibility of organized crime getting access to the agency or penetrating the agency.”⁶

In a move suggesting a lack of trust in ICE leadership, the unit chief reportedly “chose to alert the [DHS OIG] because...leadership had created these issues and he thought an outside, independent investigation was necessary.”⁷ One month prior to this whistleblower complaint, DHS had launched a recruitment campaign that included a goal of hiring 10,000 new ICE agents following the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.⁸ To do this, ICE reportedly eliminated age limits for prospective officers, shortened the length of training, and created a fast-track online training program for individuals with qualifying prior law enforcement experience.⁹

⁵ *ICE Struggles to Vet Recruits Amid US Immigration Enforcement Push, Internal Email Shows*, Reuters (Feb. 26, 2026) (www.reuters.com/world/ice-struggles-vet-recruits-amid-us-immigration-enforcement-push-internal-email-2026-02-26/).

⁶ *ICE Skipped Basic Checks in Rush for Recruits, Whistle-Blower Says*, New York Times (Sept. 3, 2026) (www.nytimes.com/2026/09/03/us/ice-recruits-national-security-risk-whistleblower.html).

⁷ *ICE Skipped Basic Checks in Rush for Recruits, Whistle-Blower Says*, New York Times (Sept. 3, 2026) (www.nytimes.com/2026/09/03/us/ice-recruits-national-security-risk-whistleblower.html).

⁸ U.S. Department of Homeland Security: *DHS Launches ‘Defend the Homeland’ Nationwide to Recruit Patriots to Join ICE Law Enforcement and Remove Worst of the Worst from U.S.* (July 29, 2025) (www.dhs.gov/news/2025/07/29/dhs-launches-defend-homeland-nationwide-recruit-patriots-join-ice-law-enforcement); *Inside Trump’s ICE expansion: Can he really hire 10,000 new agents?*, Los Angeles Times (July 18, 2025) (www.latimes.com/politics/story/2025-07-18/ice-border-patrol-immigration-hiring-trump).

⁹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security: *Secretary Noem Unveils No Age Limit for Patriotic Americans to Join ICE Law Enforcement to Help Remove Worst of the Worst from U.S.* (Aug. 5, 2025) (www.dhs.gov/news/2025/08/06/secretary-noem-unveils-no-age-limit-patriotic-americans-join-ice-law-enforcement); *ICE Skipped Basic Checks in Rush for Recruits, Whistle-Blower Says*, New York Times (Sept. 3, 2026) (www.nytimes.com/2026/09/03/us/ice-recruits-national-security-risk-whistleblower.html).

Recent lawless conduct by ICE officers underscores the seriousness of the allegations brought forward by the ICE unit chief. As you are aware, ICE officers have shot and killed multiple people since March 2025.¹⁰ ICE agents have also been accused of violating constitutional rights, using excessive force, and lying to investigators.¹¹ In June 2026, ICE appeared to recognize problems with training when it increased core training requirements and directed recent new hires to participate in supplemental training.¹² However, experts have continued to raise serious concerns about ICE agents for poor judgement and inadequate training. As one police chief said after an ICE agent killed an unarmed man in Maine in July, ICE agents are “creating this exigency during car stops that they’re just not trained to handle... they’re creating their own chaos.”¹³ There are also unanswered questions about how the ICE agent responsible for the Maine shooting was hired in the first place given his background, including repeated allegations of domestic violence and “too many red flags” to be hired by his local police department, according to a town official.¹⁴

The concerns expressed by this whistleblower about ICE leadership, taken together with ICE’s recent handling of allegations of misconduct, further underscore the need for robust Congressional oversight. To assist Congress in its oversight of ICE, and to assess recent ICE hires’ vetting and training, please provide the following documents and information as soon as possible, but not later than October 2, 2026:

1. Please provide all policies, directives, guidance, and communications since January 2025 that changed, waived, shortened, delayed, or otherwise modified requirements for vetting ICE law enforcement personnel. For each change, identify when it took effect, who authorized it, and the legal or policy authority relied upon.

¹⁰ *Mother of 3 Who Loved to Sing and Write Poetry Shot and Killed by ICE in Minneapolis*, CNN (Jan. 9, 2026) (www.cnn.com/2026/01/08/us/renee-nicole-good-minneapolis-ice-shooting-hnk); *How the Unreported Killing of an American by ICE Shattered Two Texas Families*, Texas Tribune (May 4, 2026) (www.texastribune.org/2026/05/04/ruben-ray-martinez-josh-orta-south-padre-ice-shooting-death/).

¹¹ *Federal Prosecutors Charge ICE Agent With Lying About Minnesota Shooting*, New York Times (Sept. 3, 2026) (www.nytimes.com/2026/08/29/us/christian-castro-ice-agent-minnesota-texas.html).

¹² *ICE Mandates Additional Training for New Hires After Backlash*, CBS News (June 10, 2026) (www.cbsnews.com/news/ice-training-new-hires-backlash/).

¹³ *‘They Don’t Know What They’re Doing’: ICE Agents Aren’t Following Safety Protocols During Traffic Stops, Experts Say*, Boston Globe (July 18, 2026) (www.bostonglobe.com/2026/07/18/metro/ice-traffic-stops-fatal).

¹⁴ *ICE Agent in Biddeford Shooting Had ‘Too Many Red Flags’ to Become Local Cop*, Portland Press Herald (July 27, 2026) (www.pressherald.com/2026/07/27/ice-agent-in-biddeford-shooting-had-too-many-red-flags-to-become-local-cop/).

2. For each month since January 2025, please provide the number of ICE personnel who received an offer of employment, entered or completed training, or entered on duty before completing required vetting, broken down by each category of outstanding vetting requirement, including identity verification, fingerprints, criminal history or database checks, credit checks, security questionnaires, applicable polygraphs, and background investigations.
 - a. Please provide the number of adverse personnel actions, including disciplinary actions, reprimands, or suspensions, taken against ICE personnel who, since January 2025, entered duty prior to completing all vetting requirements, and provide Office of Professional Responsibility records known as “red files” for all such employees.
3. Please provide all policies, directives, guidance, and communications since January 2025 concerning changes to minimum applicant qualifications, disqualifying criteria, testing or fitness standards, training or academy requirements, or standards for determining whether ICE recruits are qualified for operational duty.
4. For each month since January 2025, please provide the number and percentage of ICE recruits who failed, were removed from, or did not complete training and the reasons for those outcomes.
5. Please describe any retrospective review of ICE personnel hired through expedited procedures since January 2025. For personnel allowed to enter training or employment before completing required vetting since January 2025, please provide the number of employees for whom subsequent screening identified criminal conduct or associations, material misrepresentations, significant financial concerns, national security concerns, or other potentially disqualifying information.
 - a. Please identify the number of employees that ICE subsequently removed, terminated, suspended, reassigned, denied or revoked access, or otherwise subjected to remedial action, and provide Office of Professional Responsibility records known as “red files” for all such employees.
 - b. Please provide the number of current ICE employees with incomplete vetting.
6. Please provide the number of individuals who were removed from ICE training or ICE employment due to connections with organized criminal organizations, known criminals, or suspected criminal enterprises since January 2025, and provide Office of Professional Responsibility records known as “red files” for all such employees.
7. Please provide all documents and communications concerning DHS or ICE’s receipt, investigation, or response to the allegations from the whistleblower described above, including records concerning efforts to identify the whistleblower’s contacts with the media and any decision to question the whistleblower, examine or seize his

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government devices, place him on leave, restrict his duties or access, or take other personnel action.

Data should be provided in a searchable, machine-readable format, including Excel or CSV files where applicable. Please produce responsive records on a rolling basis as they become available.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these matters. If you have any questions related to this request, please contact [REDACTED] Please send any official correspondence relating to this request to [REDACTED]

Sincerely,



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator