

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 25, 2020

Mr. Rodney Cooper
Executive Director
LaSalle Corrections
26228 Ranch Road 12
Dripping Springs, TX 78620

Dear Mr. Cooper:

On September 21, 2020, the Committee on Homeland Security and the Committee on Oversight and Reform wrote to you—and to U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE)—regarding allegations raised by Ms. Dawn Wooten, a licensed practical nurse at the Irwin County Detention Center (ICDC). Among other allegations, Ms. Wooten alleged that women detained at ICDC underwent medical procedures without their consent and that ICDC violated federally recommended protocols to control the spread of the coronavirus.¹ In our letter, we requested that LaSalle Corrections produce seven categories of documents no later than October 2, 2020.² LaSalle has failed to provide any documents in response to the Committees' requests.³

LaSalle has refused to take even the most minimal steps to comply with the Committees' requests for documents, and company employees have provided conflicting information to the Committees about its steps to locate and preserve documents. For example, in October, LaSalle's Director of Operations for Louisiana and Georgia informed staff with the Committee on Homeland Security that LaSalle had produced documents responsive to the Committees' requests to ICE for the agency to review prior to their submission to our Committees.⁴ However, this month, that same individual told staff with both of our Committees that LaSalle has not taken any steps to locate and preserve documents that would be responsive to the Committees' requests.

LaSalle has repeatedly claimed that LaSalle's contract with ICE prevents the company from producing documents without ICE's approval. Despite repeated requests from our staff, LaSalle has refused to provide a copy of any of its contracts with ICE. The Director also affirmed to our

¹ Project South, Lack of Medical Care, Unsafe Work Practices, and Absence of Adequate Protection Against COVID-19 for Detained Immigrants and Employees Alike at the Irwin County Detention Center (Sept. 14, 2020) (online at <https://projectsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/OIG-ICDC-Complaint-1.pdf>).

² Letter from Chairman Bennie G. Thompson, Committee on Homeland Security, and Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Committee on Oversight and Reform, to Mr. Tony Pham, Senior Official Performing the Duties of Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs and Enforcement; Mr. Rodney Cooper, Executive Director, LaSalle Corrections; et. al. (Sept. 21, 2020) (online at <https://homeland.house.gov/imo/media/doc/ICDC%20investigation%20letter.pdf>).

³ Letter from Chairman Bennie G. Thompson, Committee on Homeland Security, and Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney, Committee on Oversight and Reform, to Mr. Tony Pham, Senior Official Performing the Duties of Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs and Enforcement; Mr. Rodney Cooper, Executive Director, LaSalle Corrections; et. al. (Nov. 12, 2020) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/2020-11-12.Thompson%20CBM%20Rice%20JR%20Cooper%20to%20Pham-ICE%20re%20Agency%20Policy.pdf>).

⁴ Telephone Call Between Staff, Committee on Homeland Security, and Director of Operations for Louisiana and Georgia, LaSalle Corrections (Oct. 5, 2020).

staffs that LaSalle had not even sought approval from ICE to release documents to the Committees.⁵ Our Committee staffs have explained repeatedly that such permission is not necessary and that LaSalle's claim that it cannot provide documents to the Committees in the absence of ICE's approval is baseless.

On November 11, 2020, a representative of LaSalle stated in an email to our Committee staff that "LaSalle Corrections is accommodating interviews being conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Civil Rights Division."⁶ However, on a November 16, 2020, call with our Committee staff, LaSalle's Director of Operations for Louisiana and Georgia indicated that LaSalle was not aware of any investigation of the allegations raised by Ms. Wooten being conducted by the DOJ.

By refusing to provide to our Committees even the most basic information about the treatment and care provided—at taxpayer expense—to women detained at ICDC, LaSalle is actively obstructing the Committees' efforts to examine the troubling allegations raised by Ms. Wooten and others.

Consequently, the Committee on Homeland Security has issued the enclosed subpoena, which requires LaSalle to produce seven categories of documents within the next two weeks, and which will help inform our Committees' joint investigation of this matter. If you have questions about how to respond to the subpoena, please contact Alison Northrop, Oversight Director with the Committee on Homeland Security, at (202) 226-2616, or Krista Boyd, General Counsel with the Committee on Oversight and Reform at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Mike Rogers, Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable James Comer, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform

⁵ Telephone Call Between Staff, Committee on Homeland Security and Committee on Oversight and Reform, and Director of Operations for Louisiana and Georgia, LaSalle Corrections (Nov. 16, 2020).

⁶ Email from Staff, LaSalle Corrections, to Staff, Committee on Homeland Security and Committee on Oversight and Reform (Nov. 11, 2020).