



New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice
Empower and Protect Immigrants

ORAL TESTIMONY

House Committee on Homeland Security

“The Human Cost of Immigration Enforcement and Detention: Conditions and Oversight at Delaney Hall”

Good Afternoon, distinguished members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Viri Martinez, and I serve as the Deputy Director of Strategy with the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice (NJAIJ). NJAIJ is the state’s largest immigration coalition, and we fight for policies that protect and empower immigrants. Our coalition has been sounding the alarm around Delaney Hall, well before it reopened. As such, we are well-positioned to provide testimony regarding the conditions and oversight at the facility.

New Jersey has been a national leader in the fight against immigrant detention. In 2021, New Jersey passed A5207 into law, which imposed a statewide ban on public and privately owned ICE contracts. But in 2023, our statewide ban was challenged, and GEO Group, a multibillion-dollar private prison corporation, would later join the legal suit. The private provisions of the statewide detention ban that immigrant communities fought for would later be partially struck down by the courts, allowing the GEO Group to secure a 15-year contract, valued at \$1 billion. Let’s be clear, \$1 billion profited from family separation and immigrant misery.

Delaney Hall has been a dangerous facility well before it even opened. People detained inside have been subject to medical neglect, psychological torture, poor living conditions, and even death. People like Emanuel, who spent 130 days in what the GEO Group labeled medical isolation, but what the public knows to be solitary confinement. GEO Group stripped him of his crutches – crutches he needed to walk – because they labeled them as weapons. People like Jean Wilson Brutus, a healthy 41-year-old asylum seeker, who was walked into Delaney Hall by ICE in December of 2025, and less than 24 hours in federal custody, was rushed into an ambulance. He was pronounced dead at the hospital, and to this day, his family has not been granted an independent autopsy for their loved one. People like the hunger strikers who were physically beaten, tear-gassed, denied access to their attorneys and family visitation as retaliation for speaking out against the conditions inside Delaney Hall. Through all of this, GEO Group continued to pocket its \$164 per bed, per day.



Delaney Hall has been the subject of immense controversy and a lack of transparency. Following the reopening of the facility, New Jersey's capacity for immigration detention has more than quadrupled. In its first week of operation, I led the daily vigils outside Delaney Hall, calling for the GEO Group to allow the City of Newark to do its legal due diligence in inspecting the facility. The world witnessed when dozens of masked ICE agents swarmed Representative Mclver, Representative Watson Coleman, Representative Menendez, and arrested Mayor Baraka on May 9th, 2025. We asked ourselves then: If the GEO Group and ICE have nothing to hide, why have we witnessed so many acts of aggression against public officials? One year later, and we are still asking ourselves this very same question. We have seen Representative Mclver be politically persecuted for doing the job she was elected to do. Representative Menendez was denied access to Delaney Hall for over 15 hours, forcing him to stay up all night until he was let in. Senator Kim was pepper-sprayed by ICE agents when attempting to de-escalate the agents from attacking the crowd. Governor Sherill was denied access, and when eventually allowed inside, was barred from speaking to detained New Jerseyans. The New Jersey Health Department was prohibited from assessing the medical unit, sleeping quarters, and bathrooms – the most important areas that needed oversight. It is one year later, and nothing has changed. How many more times do we have to talk about Delaney Hall until it's permanently shut down?

The people in detention are using every creative avenue to fight for their freedom. We must do everything in our power to ensure Delaney Hall is closed down for good. New Jersey is a leader in the fight for immigrant justice, and we, as NJAIJ, will continue standing with families and holding a billion-dollar private prison operator accountable until Delaney Hall is permanently shut down.

We thank you again for the opportunity to testify. We are happy to take questions or provide greater clarification as needed.