

RESOLUTION NO. 13 OF 2022

BY THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION:

A RESOLUTION TO REQUEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO CORRECT SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS WITHIN THE EIGHT ICE DETENTION CENTERS IN LOUISIANA AND TO REQUEST THAT THE HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE INVESTIGATE THESE SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS AND PROVIDE OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND OTHER IMMIGRANTS AND THE COMMUNITY, AND TO OTHERWISE PROVIDE WITH RESPECT THERETO

WHEREAS the state of Louisiana has more immigration detention centers (8) than any other state except Texas and these detention centers are receiving thousands of asylum seekers from the U.S./Mexico border who are transported to Louisiana, incarcerated here at significant cost to taxpayers, and often released within a few weeks to a few months to reunite with their families or sponsors in various parts of the United States and prepare for their asylum hearings. and;

WHEREAS many of these asylum seekers are fleeing horrific conditions, including religious persecution, totalitarian dictatorships, political violence, torture, and even genocide, and many have experienced violence at the hands of their own governments or fled after their family members were killed; and

WHEREAS, the United States is a signatory to three international treaties that establish the legal right to seek asylum in a safe country for anyone fleeing persecution, torture, or violence: the Geneva Convention, the Convention Against Torture, and the 1967 Refugee Protocol; and

WHEREAS, U.S. taxpayers are paying millions of dollars to private prisons companies to incarcerate asylum seekers in Louisiana at an average cost of \$133.00 per immigrant per day, with guaranteed payments for a minimum number of 4,605 beds in Louisiana, yet those companies are failing to comply with their government contracts by not providing potable drinking water, nutritious food, and safe and sanitary living conditions, by denying medical care even for life threatening conditions, and by failing to provide safe and free transportation to an airport or bus station to all immigrants who are released, all of which are required by ICE's own 2011 Performance Based National Detention Standards; and

WHEREAS, local and national human rights organizations have documented and filed over 20 civil rights complaints in the past year alone detailing egregious human rights abuses, including unsanitary conditions, torture and physical abuse, in the ICE detention centers in Louisiana and Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, investigators at the Department of Homeland Security have already recommended that ICE stop sending immigrants to one of the Louisiana detention centers (Winn Correctional Center) because of "a culture and conditions that can lead to abuse, mistreatment, and discrimination," as well as serious plumbing deficiencies and non functional housing unit smoke barrier doors, yet immigrants are still being sent to this detention center; and

WHEREAS, in July of 2021, Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention and other organizations sent a letter to the Department of Homeland Security asking that they address the egregious violations of ICE's standards for releasing immigrants that put their safety at risk resulting in immigrants left stranded at airports, bus stations, and with a few even going missing for a few days, yet six months later most of the ICE detention centers in Louisiana continue to violate these standards every day, often telling families that their family member will not be released from detention unless they agree to pay for a taxi of anywhere from \$200-\$600, when the facility is legally responsible for providing free transportation to the bus station or airport; and

WHEREAS, volunteers from at least ten local churches, as part of the statewide network Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention, have stepped in to facilitate the safe transport of over 1200 immigrants from 55 countries released from Louisiana and Mississippi detention centers through Shreveport to reunite with their families or sponsors in the United States during the past ten months, and have provided transportation, shelter, meals, clothing, toiletries, translation, and access to phones and internet, but are unable to fully address the ongoing needs created by the ICE New

Orleans Field Office's failure to ensure that its detention centers comply with their contracts by providing free and safe transportation to a bus station or airport for all immigrants who are released; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Caddo Parish Commission in due, legal and regular session convened that the that the Caddo Parish Commission requests that the White House and the Department of Homeland Security take immediate action to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the ICE New Orleans Field Office and the Louisiana ICE detention centers and all of the civil rights complaints made against them and to address the human rights violations against asylum seekers and other immigrants.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Caddo Parish Commission requests that the House Department of Homeland Security Oversight Committee investigate the systemic problems within the ICE New Orleans Field Office and its detention centers and provide oversight and accountability to ensure an end to the human rights violations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Caddo Parish Commission requests that the Department of Homeland Security take immediate steps to address the violations around release protocols and ensure that the ICE New Orleans Field Office comes into compliance with the Performance Based National Detention Standards for releases by:

- Ensuring that detention center staff provide free transportation to all individuals being released, to either a full service bus station, an airport, or to a nonprofit that is prepared to help them make travel arrangements to reunite with their families or sponsors.
- Providing access to interpreters and translated materials to inform them of their post-release transportation options and during the entire release process.
- Facilitating free communication with families or sponsors about releases prior to them happening. • Ensuring that there are public, accessible materials outlining the post-release transportation options for each of the nine detention centers in Louisiana and Mississippi.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Department of Homeland Security, the White House Office on Intergovernmental Affairs, and to the Chair of the House Department of Homeland Security Oversight Committee, Representative Bennie Thompson.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all resolutions or parts thereof in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

Approved as to legal form:

Parish Attorney

Date