

Letter/Postcard Writing Guide

Opposing ICE Collaboration in Berks County

1. Opening: State Your Concern Directly

Explain why you are writing and name the policy/practice that you oppose.

2. Personal Connection

Identify yourself and why this issue affects you or your community.

3. Describe the Harm or Risk

Mention what ICE has done (mistaken detentions, racial targeting, rights violations).

4. Legal and Constitutional Values

Emphasize that due process applies to ALL persons, not just citizens.

5. Local Safety and Community Trust

Explain why this makes policing worse, not better.

6. Financial / Resource Concern

Point out that taxpayer dollars and deputy time should stay focused on local duties.

7. Accountability and Transparency

Express concern about their liability and complicity

8. Call to Action (Direct Request)

Clearly ask the Prison Board for what you want.

Step 1 examples:

- I am writing to express my strong objection to Berks County Sheriff's Office and Prison executing detainees for ICE.
- I have serious concerns about the County Sheriff's Office and Prison participating in federal immigration enforcement.

Step 2 examples:

- I am a constituent, and I am concerned about how collaboration with ICE affects community trust and safety.
- As someone who lives in a diverse neighborhood/school/workplace, I value the connections and contributions of my neighbors.

Step 3 examples:

- ICE has detained people who were legally following immigration procedures, which shows how easily 'mistakes' turn into family separations.
- To fill their quota, new ICE tactics include targeting people based on appearance, not looking like a white-American.
- Immigrants in a county with a detention center are 6.4 times more likely to be arrested. (CERES Policy Research, 2022)

Step 4 examples:

- The Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments protect due process rights for every person in the United States. Holding someone past their normal release date risks a violation of their rights.
- ICE databases are outdated and detainer requests do not indicate a reason, which increases the risk of unconstitutional detentions.
- "The ACLU-PA urges county officials to implement a policy of only honoring ICE detainees if they are accompanied by a valid judicial warrant backed by probable cause, as required by the Fourth Amendment. ICE detainees are not reviewed by judges or neutral decision makers."

Step 5 examples:

- When residents fear law enforcement, they stop calling for help or reporting crimes.
- Because of our large Puerto Rican population, we have a greater risk for American citizens being unlawfully detained.
- This current ICE regime cannot be trusted to treat people humanely, so you're knowingly putting that person in harm's way, denying access to their loved ones and to legal representation.
- "But the stories of the conditions at the facility [in Texas], revealed in data and recordings from more than a hundred 911 calls obtained by The Associated Press — in addition to follow-up interviews and court filings — offer a disturbing portrait of overcrowding, medical neglect, malnutrition and emotional distress" (AP News, 3-26-26).

Step 6 examples:

- The warden has stated that the prison is already understaffed. Does the union approve of deputies doing someone else's job, not on their contract?
- Fear and trauma cause a loss of labor for agriculture and construction. Civic involvement and corporate engagement decline when residents are uneasy.
- So-called reimbursements or promises of payment, training, or equipment in the short term cannot justify the long-term trauma and impact on community cohesion.
- "...the Massachusetts Supreme Court held that when state or local police honor an ICE detainer, they are creating a new arrest of the individual they detain. However, because immigration violations are civil – not criminal, police and jails have no authority or mechanism to justify detention solely on charges of immigration violations." (ACLU-PA).

Step 7 examples:

- ICE is very clear and repeats: "Immigration detainers are only requests. They don't impose any obligations on law enforcement agencies." (Per ICE.gov)
- The data used to issue detainers does not adequately inform the person of their charges, so you are risking complicity with illegal detention.
- "In at least 4,421 cases, more than 400 federal judges ruled since the beginning of October that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is holding people illegally as it carries out its mass-deportation campaign, Reuters found (2-14-26)."

Step 8 examples:

- I respectfully urge you to end the practice of contacting ICE voluntarily.
- I ask you to stop responding to ICE detainers and stop using county resources for federal immigration enforcement.
- I do not want my tax dollars used to detain people past their release date.

