



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Criminal Justice Leaders Call for Protection of Immigrants
in Midst of COVID-19 Pandemic**

*Amicus Brief by Current and Former DAs and Police Chiefs Argues Continued
Transfer to Immigration Detention Centers Threatens Wider COVID Spread and
Undermines Public Safety*

SAN FRANCISCO – Today, 10 current and former district attorneys and police chiefs from across California filed an [amicus curiae letter brief](#) in the Supreme Court of California in support of a lawsuit challenging the ongoing transfer of individuals to ICE custody in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The brief argues that a moratorium on transfers of detained immigrants from local and state custody to federal detention facilities is necessary in light of the grave risk COVID-19 poses, and the increased risk of outbreaks in crowded environments such as immigration detention facilities.

“This pandemic is testing the moral compass of our country,” said **Miriam Krinsky, executive director of Fair and Just Prosecution**. “The civil offense of crossing a border without documentation should not be a death sentence. Yet, thousands are being put at risk every day by unnecessary incarceration within detention centers. The court must mandate that California stop the practice of voluntary transfers to these facilities immediately as it threatens to put lives at risk, fractures fragile bonds of trust between law enforcement and immigrant communities, and undermines efforts to promote and protect the health and safety of our community during this challenging time.”

Amici underscore the threat of COVID-19 within custodial settings in their brief, noting: “Overcrowding, close quarters, inadequate healthcare, and lack of access to hygiene products and comprehensive sanitation, among other dynamics, render [detention] facilities highly susceptible to the rapid and fatal spread of COVID-19.” They also call attention to how local entanglement in federal immigration enforcement erodes public trust and undermines public safety saying: “Immigrant communities in general, and undocumented immigrants in particular, are less likely to trust and cooperate with local police and prosecutors...fundamentally undermin[ing] the ability of law enforcement and prosecutors to protect the public safety of *all* members of the community. This erosion of community trust is an unacceptable consequence that will negatively impact the safety and well-being of our entire community.”

“As a prosecutor, my job is to promote the health and safety of all members of my community, and in the midst of a deadly pandemic, our number one focus must be on saving lives,” said **San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin**. “California’s success in flattening the curve must not be jeopardized by misguided actions that fail to promote public safety and which ultimately increase the likelihood of a

catastrophic outbreak that will impact all members of our community within and outside of immigration detention centers.”

In recent weeks, correctional and detention facilities have received increased scrutiny as deeply concerning infection rates such as those being seen in Ohio and Arkansas are linked to outbreaks in custodial settings, where overcrowding and unsanitary conditions limit the ability to social distance and take other precautions that limit the spread of coronavirus.

“Our communities are safest when there is trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve,” said **Jim Bueermann, Former Chief, City of Redlands Police Department, California and former President of the Police Foundation**. “When local law enforcement is made to act as de facto immigration agents, the trust the public has in local officers to act in their best interest and keep them safe is eroded. People are worried enough about a virus that puts their lives and the lives of their families at risk. They should not have to also fear that the officers sworn to protect and serve their communities will be the ones who will consign them to a potential death sentence.”

The letter brief was authored and organized by [Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP](#), [Immigrant Legal Resource Center](#), and [Fair and Just Prosecution](#).

Read the letter brief [here](#) and see the list of signatories below.

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Fair and Just Prosecution is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms. To learn more about FJP’s work, visit <http://www.fairandjustprosecution.org/> or follow us on Facebook [@FairAndJustProsecution](#).

List of Signatories

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