

VIA EMAIL

August 27, 2025



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J. Bennett Guess
Executive Director

Sheriff Richard K. Jones
Butler County Corrections Center
705 Hanover Street
Hamilton, OH 45011
rjones@butlersheriff.org

Sheriff Alex Lape
Fairfield County Sheriff's Office
345 Lincoln Avenue
Lancaster, OH 43130
alex.lape@fairfieldcountyohio.gov

Sheriff Vernon P. Stanforth
Fayette County Sheriff's Office
1500 Robinson Road SE
Washington CH, OH 43160
vernon.stanforth@fayette-co-oh.com

Sheriff Scott A. Hildenbrand
Gauga County Safety Center
12450 Merritt Road
Chardon, OH 44024
geaugaso@co.geauga.oh.us

Sheriff Frank Leonbruno
Lake County Sheriff's Office
104 E. Erie Street
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Sheriff Jerry Greene
Mahoning County Sheriff's Office
110 Fifth Avenue
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Sheriff Bruce Zuchowski
Portage County Sheriff's Office
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Sheriff Fredrick Stevens
Seneca County Sheriff's Office
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Dennis Sullivan
Executive Director
Corrections Center of
Northwest Ohio
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Stryker, Ohio 43557-9418
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Dear Sheriffs Jones, Hildenbrand, Lape, Stanforth, Leonbruno, Greene,
Zuchowski, Stevens, and Mr. Sullivan,

You are receiving this letter because it has come to our attention that your office has detained immigrants and is incarcerating them in county jails under the supposed authority of agreements with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). But as Attorney General Dave Yost has made clear, these agreements were invalid at their inception and have no legal force. For you to continue holding anyone under that invalid authority is unlawful, and a violation of these individuals' constitutional rights.

We demand that you immediately release every detainee who is currently in your custody without legal authority and cease all unlawful immigration enforcement actions.

State and local law enforcement agencies lack inherent authority to carry out federal immigration enforcement. Such authority is vested solely in the federal government. *See Arizona v. United States*, 567 U.S. 387, 394 (2012). While it is true that the federal government may enter into an agreement with a State or political subdivision of a State to engage in immigration-related enforcement or detention, any such agreement at the county level may be authorized only by the county board of commissioners. Any agreement that you yourself signed as the supposed basis for your authority is therefore invalid. *See* Letter from Attorney Dave Yost to Hon. Michael T. Grosmer, Butler County Prosecuting Attorney (August 26, 2025) at 10–11 (affirming that “[n]o law authorizes the county sheriff to unilaterally enter a contract with federal immigration authorities,” and that it is only the county commissioner who has ““general contracting authority for the county”” (citing 2024 Ohio Atty.Gen.Ops No. 2024-006, Slip Op. at 8; 2-44)).

To the extent that your office is carrying out immigration enforcement actions, such as housing, transporting, or otherwise holding in detention any individuals pursuant to an agreement executed by you, such actions are unlawful. Any individual so detained is therefore being unconstitutionally held without probable cause and must be released forthwith.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'F' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Freda J. Levenson
Legal Director/Chief Legal Officer
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