



## City of Seattle

Ed Murray, Mayor

# Seattle LGBT Commission

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Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

**Re: Request ICE to initiate negotiations and end threats of force-feeding; initiate investigation by Labor & Industry of detainee pay at the Northwest Detention Center**

Governor Inslee:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Seattle LGBT Commission to request that you ask Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to initiate accountable negotiations with detainees at the Northwest Detention Center and that your office recommend an investigation by Washington State Department of Labor & Industry into the \$1 a-day pay rate that detainees receive for work done at the Northwest Detention Center.

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, immigrant detainees at the Northwest Detention Center began a hunger strike to protest inhumane treatment and deportations. According to their demand letter, detainees are paid only \$1 for a full day's work, the food provided is inadequate, and detainees and their families are paying exorbitantly high commissary costs. Detainees that are on hunger strike have been threatened with force-feeding, a practice prohibited by the World Medical Association, and condemned by the International Red Cross and the United Nations.

These detainees along with a number of prominent civil rights groups including National Council of La Raza, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, National Center for Transgender Equality, and Witness for Peace Northwest demand an end to the unprecedented numbers of deportations under the Obama administration. Nearly 2 million people have been deported - more people than under all previous presidents combined.

As hunger-strikers at the Northwest Detention center face increasing pressure, reports of retaliation and threats of force feeding, these civil rights leaders need your protection. We call on your leadership to strongly request ICE to immediately end threats of force-feeding and begin accountable negotiations with the detainees.

We also support the detainees in their demands that work done in the detention center be protected by Washington State wage and hour laws, like all other employees in the state. We request that your administration takes this opportunity to address a fundamental unfairness by initiating an investigation by Washington State Department of Labor & Industry.

As a commission, our commitment to support LGBTQ immigrants compels us to support demands for fair wages and humane treatment. These issues impact members of Seattle's LGBTQ communities, as LGBTQ immigrants are disproportionately targeted by police, and are at greater risk of detention. Many LGBTQ people in detention are fleeing violence and persecution in their countries of origin. They are particularly vulnerable to prolonged

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detention and abuse- including physical and sexual abuse, denial of medical services (including transgender specific health care), solitary confinement/ administrative segregation or being placed intentionally in harm's way, and having their cases dismissed if they do not conform to stereotypes about what it means to be gay or lesbian.

On these issues, relief delayed is relief denied to too many families in Washington State. As the national leader in fair wages and a strong supporter of human rights, Washington is uniquely suited to lead the country in addressing these harms.

Thank you for consideration in this matter,

Respectfully,

Cc: