

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 4, 2026

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We write with grave concerns about children's exposure to increasingly violent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) operations and the impacts of that exposure on their health, wellbeing, and long-term development. Children have become ensnared in ICE's and CBP's aggressive and indiscriminate enforcement tactics, with ICE conducting raids in or near schools and day care centers and apprehending young children. These practices have triggered national outrage and risk traumatizing children and depriving them of access to education and basic services, with lasting consequences for their behavioral, physical, academic, and emotional wellbeing. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has a variety of programs, offices, and agencies that research and provide for children's physical and mental health and wellbeing, including the Administration for Children & Families (ACF), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), and National Institutes of Health (NIH). We request that you provide any information HHS has regarding the impact of ICE and CBP operations on children's mental health and development.

Under the Trump Administration, children — both U.S. citizen and immigrant children alike — have been exposed to more frequent and intense immigration operations. On Day 1 of this administration, President Trump rescinded ICE's sensitive locations policy that protected schools, places of worship, hospitals, and other sensitive places from ICE raids.¹ Since then, ICE has carried out raids at schools,² day care centers,³ and even a child's birthday party.⁴ ICE has adopted more militarized and chaotic arrest tactics, including smashing car windows and raining glass on drivers and passengers, deploying tear gas in residential neighborhoods and schools, and unleashing "attack dogs."⁵ Even when children are not the direct target, their exposure to such

¹ White House, "Protecting the American People Against Invasion," January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-the-american-people-against-invasion/>.

² MPR News, "Minneapolis schools cancel classes after Border Patrol clash disrupts dismissal at Roosevelt," Elizabeth Shockman, January 8, 2026, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2026/01/08/after-border-patrol-clash-at-roosevelt-minneapolis-schools-cancel-classes>.

³ CNN, "Chicago day care teacher detained by ICE agents as parents were dropping off their children," Whitney Wild, November 6, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/11/06/us/chicago-day-care-ice-arrest-hnk>.

⁴ The Texas Tribune, "Months after detaining 47 people accused of being Tren de Aragua in Austin, authorities offer no evidence of gang ties," Alejandro Serrano, June 4, 2025, <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/06/04/texas-immigration-raid-hays-county-austin-venezuelan-gang/>.

tactics can create psychological trauma,⁶ with some children describing life under a Trump-led ICE as “like living in fear all the time.”⁷

Recent incidents include:

- In Minnesota, a 5-year-old boy arriving home from preschool was taken by federal agents along with his father to a detention facility in Texas, “making him the fourth student from his Minneapolis suburb to be detained by immigration officers in recent weeks.”⁸ Alarming, neighbors and school officials have alleged that federal immigration officers used the preschooler as “bait” by telling him to knock on the door to his house so that his mother would answer.⁹ That same week, immigration agents arrested and detained a 2-year-old girl in the city and flew her to Texas, reportedly in violation of a court order.¹⁰
- Also in Minnesota, armed U.S. Border Patrol officers entered school property during dismissal and reportedly “began tackling people, handcuffed two staff members and released chemical weapons on bystanders.”¹¹ A video of the incident “show[s] armed, masked officers with apparent Border Patrol insignia on their uniforms dragging a person on a sidewalk outside of the high school.”¹² After this incident and the killing of a U.S. citizen mother named Renee Good, Minneapolis Public Schools canceled classes for children district-wide.¹³
- In Massachusetts, a man suffered an apparent seizure while ICE agents attempted to detain his wife as their toddler cried within arm’s reach.¹⁴ Witnesses allege agents pushed

⁵ CNN, “As ICE escalates its tactics, are federal agents truly ‘untouchable’ in the eyes of the law?,” Josh Campbell, November 15, 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/11/15/us/ice-federal-agents-immigration-force>; The Guardian, “Senator says ICE ‘attack dog’ caused ‘horrific’ injuries to unresisting man as he was detained,” Adam Gabbatt, December 6, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/dec/06/us-senator-ice-attack-dog-horrific-injuries>; The New Republic, “ICE Agents Released an Attack Dog on a Man: Report,” Robert McCoy, December 6, 2025, <https://newrepublic.com/post/204073/ice-agents-attack-dog-immigration-washington>.

⁶ American Immigration Council, “U.S. Citizen Children Impacted by Immigration Enforcement,” June 24, 2021, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/fact-sheet/us-citizen-children-impacted-immigration-enforcement/>; Society for Research in Child Development, “Deportation Threatens the Psychological, Physical, and Socioeconomic Well-being of Children and Families,” March 2025, https://www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/Child%20Policy%20Brief_Deportation_10292025.pdf.

⁷ New York Times, “A Winter of Anguish for Minneapolis Children,” Corina Knoll, February 4, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/04/us/minneapolis-children-ice-schools.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>.

⁸ PBS News, “Federal officers detain 5-year-old boy who a Minnesota school official says was used as ‘bait,’” Hallie Golden and Sarah Raza, January 22, 2026, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/federal-officers-detain-5-year-old-boy-who-a-minnesota-school-official-says-was-used-as-bait>.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ CNN, “Minnesota toddler taken into ICE custody with father and flown to Texas is returned to mother next day, lawyer says,” Emma Tucker, January 24, 2026, <https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/24/us/elvis-tipan-echeverria-toddler-ice-arrest-minnesota>.

¹¹ MPR News, “Minneapolis schools cancel classes after Border Patrol clash disrupts dismissal at Roosevelt,” Elizabeth Shockman, January 8, 2026, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2026/01/08/after-border-patrol-clash-at-roosevelt-minneapolis-schools-cancel-classes>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ The Guardian, “ICE facing fierce backlash after video apparently shows unconscious man clutching child during arrest,” Marina Dunbar, November 7, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/07/ice-video-unconscious-man-child-arrest>; The Guardian, “Senator says ICE ‘attack dog’ caused ‘horrific’ injuries to unresisting

him, struck him, and pressed on his neck while the child remained trapped between the adults.¹⁵

- In Illinois, ICE agents forcibly detained a day care teacher in front of her students.¹⁶ In another Chicago-based incident, masked agents deployed tear gas near an elementary school in Logan Square, sending children running and teachers scrambling for cover.¹⁷ In yet another incident, a man and his U.S.-citizen family were in their car during a routine shopping trip when federal immigration agents pepper-sprayed them, including the one-year-old daughter, who was left struggling to open her eyes and to breathe.¹⁸
- In Texas, ICE agents stormed a five-year-old child's birthday party, where state and federal officers conducted an operation that resulted in the apprehension of 47 people, including nine minors — one of whom was just three years old.¹⁹

Children's exposure to traumatic ICE raids occurring in their communities across America can have lasting effects on their long-term health and development, including their behavioral and psychological wellbeing.²⁰ One expert warns that "[w]e are witnessing the effects of chronic fear, disrupted attachment, and intergenerational trauma on a massive scale."²¹ Research shows that children who witness the arrest of a parent often display symptoms of toxic stress, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, reactions comparable to those observed in children exposed to war or community violence.²² In mixed-status families, children "increasingly live with the fear

man as he was detained," Adam Gabbatt, December 6, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/dec/06/us-senator-ice-attack-dog-horrific-injuries>.

¹⁵ The Guardian, "ICE facing fierce backlash after video apparently shows unconscious man clutching child during arrest," Marina Dunbar, November 7, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/07/ice-video-unconscious-man-child-arrest>.

¹⁶ CNN, "Chicago day care teacher detained by ICE agents as parents were dropping off their children," Whitney Wild, November 6, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/11/06/us/chicago-day-care-ice-arrest-hnk>.

¹⁷ Associated Press, "Chicago's children are getting caught in the chaos of immigration crackdowns," Claire Galofaro, October 28, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/chicago-immigration-trump-crackdown-school-children-c9a19835cac13c0fbbecc9f4bf4f0a2>.

¹⁸ The Guardian, "ICE agents accused of pepper-spraying Illinois parents and their one-year-old," Richard Luscombe, November 11, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/11/ice-agents-pepper-spray-man-baby-daughter>.

¹⁹ The Texas Tribune, "Months after detaining 47 people accused of being Tren de Aragua in Austin, authorities offer no evidence of gang ties," Alejandro Serrano, June 4, 2025, <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/06/04/texas-immigration-raid-hays-county-austin-venezuelan-gang/>.

²⁰ Center for Disease Control, "About Adverse Childhood Experiences," September 24, 2025, <https://www.cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html>; NEA Today, "The Trauma Immigration Raids Leave in Classrooms," Brenda Álvarez, September 10, 2025, <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/trauma-immigration-raids-leave-classrooms>; University of California Riverside News, "Child mental health crisis tied to immigration enforcement," Iqbal Pittalwala, August 8, 2025, <https://news.ucr.edu/articles/2025/08/08/child-mental-health-crisis-tied-immigration-enforcement>; The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, "Children, Youth, and Families Who Experience Migration-Related Trauma and Family Separation," Elmore Borbon, D., Tant, E., and Rosado, J., 2021, https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/children_youth_and_families_who_experience_migration_related_trauma_and_family_separation.pdf.

²¹ University of California Riverside News, "Child mental health crisis tied to immigration enforcement," Iqbal Pittalwala, August 8, 2025, <https://news.ucr.edu/articles/2025/08/08/child-mental-health-crisis-tied-immigration-enforcement>.

²² American Psychological Association, "U.S. immigration policy: Mental health impacts of increased detentions and deportations," Myriam Vidal Valero, September 1, 2025, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2025/09/mental-health-immigration-enforcement>; Children's Equity Project, "The Impacts of Family Separation and Deportation on Children," Cinthia Palomino, Gladys Aponte, Xigrid Soto-Boykin, Darielle Blevins, Shantel Meek, Maki Park,

that a routine day could result in detention or deportation of a loved one, which is associated with increased PTSD and internalizing symptoms.”²³

ICE operations also appear to be impacting children’s academic development.²⁴ In districts where raids have occurred, schools have reported declines in school attendance and student performance.²⁵ For example, during a period of intense immigration raids in Central Valley, California, children in the area missed 22 percent more school days compared to the same period in past years, with the effect most pronounced among children in Kindergarten through 5th grade.²⁶ In some schools, nearly 50 percent of students have been absent following school-based ICE raids,²⁷ and “[m]issed school days often translate into academic decline, social isolation, and missed opportunities for developmental support.”²⁸ Students from immigrant families who continue to attend class do so “fearfully,” while taking on new responsibilities such as dropping their younger siblings off at school, doing the grocery shopping, or working to pay for their families’ needs.²⁹ Similarly, early childhood providers have noted attrition from day care, after-school programs, and other community programs that typically serve as spaces for positive socialization, mental health counselling, and other forms of support.³⁰

Finally, immigration enforcement actions appear to be disrupting children’s access to health care. More than four out of every five health care workers report significant or moderate decreases in patient visits since January 2025.³¹ When children forego routine immunizations,

Jennifer Oppenheim, and Eric Bucher, May 2025, <https://cep.asu.edu/sites/g/files/litvpz916/files/2025-05/The%20Impacts%20of%20Family%20Separation%20and%20Deportation%20on%20Children's%20Health%2C%20Mental%20Health%2C%20Economic%20Conditions%2C%20Development%2C%20and%20Education%20%286%29.pdf>.

²³ *Id.*; Psychiatry Online, “Special Report: U.S. Immigration Policy and the Mental Health of Children and Families,” Lisa Fortuna, Kevin Gutierrez, Paula Mendoza, Omar Abbas, Austin Nguy, and Natan J. Vega-Potler, August 1, 2025, <https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/epub/10.1176/appi.pn.2025.08.8.19>.

²⁴ The Journalist’s Resource, “Student absences spiked in California, test scores fell in Florida amid surge in US immigration enforcement,” Denise-Marie Ordway, November 25, 2025, <https://journalistsresource.org/education/students-absent-test-scores-immigration-enforcement-arrest-research/>.

²⁵ NEA Today, “The Trauma Immigration Raids Leave in Classrooms,” Brenda Álvarez, September 10, 2025, <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/trauma-immigration-raids-leave-classrooms>.

²⁶ PNAS, “Recent immigration raids increased student absences,” Thomas Dee, November 4, 2025, <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2510395122>; Stanford Report, “Student absences rose amid heightened immigration enforcement, Stanford study shows,” Carrie Spector, June 16, 2025, <https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2025/06/student-absences-immigration-california-study/>.

²⁷ NEA Today, “The Trauma Immigration Raids Leave in Classrooms,” Brenda Álvarez, September 10, 2025, <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/trauma-immigration-raids-leave-classrooms>.

²⁸ Psychiatry Online, “Special Report: U.S. Immigration Policy and the Mental Health of Children and Families,” Lisa Fortuna, Kevin Gutierrez, Paula Mendoza, Omar Abbas, Austin Nguy, and Natan J. Vega-Potler, July 25, 2025, <https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/epub/10.1176/appi.pn.2025.08.8.19>.

²⁹ El País, “ICE raids trigger school absenteeism and traumatize children: ‘They have been forced to leave their childhood behind’,” Alba Asenjo Domínguez, December 19, 2025, <https://english.elpais.com/usa/2025-12-20/ice-raids-trigger-school-absenteeism-and-traumatize-children-they-have-been-forced-to-leave-their-childhood-behind.html>.

³⁰ The Hechinger Report, “Immigration enforcement is driving away early childhood educators,” Jackie Mader, December 10, 2025, <https://hechingerreport.org/immigration-enforcement-is-driving-away-early-childhood-educators/>.

³¹ Physicians for Human Rights, “ICE Tactics and Deportation Fears Limit Access to Health Care for Children of Immigrants: Survey,” press release, November 19, 2025, <https://phr.org/news/ice-tactics-and-deportation-fears-limit-access-to-health-care-for-children-of-immigrants-survey/>.

developmental screenings, and preventive interventions, it can lead to delayed diagnoses and late-stage disease presentations.³² Physicians have noted signs of declining physical and mental health during children’s medical visits. For example, one doctor observed “abnormal weight gain trajectories” in children not getting exercise outdoors due to “fear of encountering ICE,” and another pediatrician reported that “minors [are] constantly crying during their well-child checks expressing their fear for themselves and their families.”³³

ICE and CBP operations that treat children like collateral damage threaten their physical and mental health and wellbeing — compounding the threats children are facing from other immigration policy changes, such as the Trump Administration’s attempt to terminate the Flores Settlement Agreement’s protections for children in immigration custody.³⁴ This disregard for child welfare undermines the government’s core child-protection obligations.³⁵ Yet your agency does not appear to be taking any action to speak out against or investigate the impacts of the Trump Administration’s immigration agenda on children. Given HHS’s responsibility for the health and wellbeing of children in the United States, we request any data your department has collected regarding the impact of immigration operation on children’s health and development, including answers to the following questions by February 18, 2026:

1. How have children been affected by ICE’s and CBP’s aggressive tactics, including the use of tear gas, explosives, attack dogs, and window smashing in or near schools, child care centers, bus stops, residential neighborhoods, playgrounds, and other locations? Based on studies that HHS or HHS agencies or offices have conducted, please describe any mental health challenges, behavioral changes, or developmental setbacks that children may experience because of these tactics.
2. Please describe any mental health challenges, behavioral changes, or developmental setbacks that children may experience in the case of the detention or deportation of their caregivers.
3. Immigration enforcement operations appear to be prompting children to miss school, perform more poorly in school, and miss doctor’s appointments.³⁶ Based on studies that HHS or HHS agencies or offices have conducted, please describe any impacts on children’s health and development that children may experience due to such changes.
 - a. Beyond attrition from schools and doctor’s appointments, have HHS agencies or offices observed attrition from any other programs or services (such as day care and after school programs, community health centers, work or volunteer opportunities, or public safety resources), including any HHS programs (such as Head Start, Early Head Start, and Healthy Start)?

³² *Id.*

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ New York Times, “Judge Rejects Trump’s Attempt to End Standards of Care for Detained Migrant Children,” Miriam Jordan, August 15, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/15/us/migrant-children-trump-flores-settlement.html>.

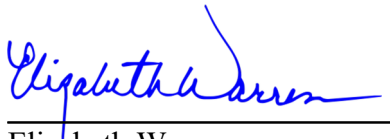
³⁵ Congressional Research Service, “Child Migrants at the Border: The Flores Settlement Agreement and Other Legal Developments,” December 3, 2024, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF11799>.

³⁶ The Journalist’s Resource, “Student absences spiked in California, test scores fell in Florida amid surge in US immigration enforcement,” Denise-Marie Ordway, November 25, 2025, <https://journalistsresource.org/education/students-absent-test-scores-immigration-enforcement-arrest-research/>.

4. Have HHS agencies and programs that serve children such as ACF, CMS, and ORR, seen disruptions to the ability to impart services to children and families or a decrease in participation as a result of ICE's enforcement tactics in communities across America? Please provide any specific data illuminating these trends.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



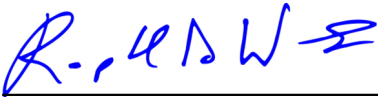
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



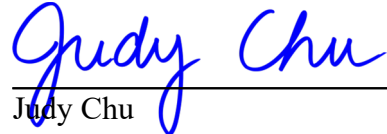
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



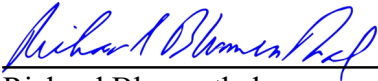
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



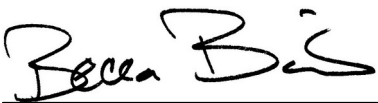
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Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Becca Balint
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



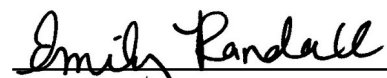
Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress



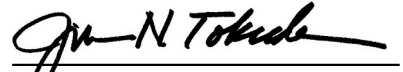
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Emily Randall
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



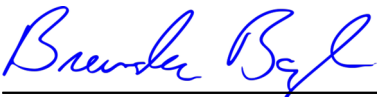
Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



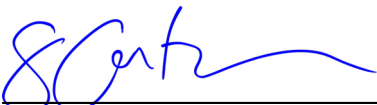
SETH MOULTON
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Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



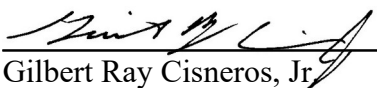
Dina Titus
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Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
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Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



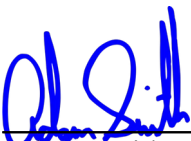
Madeleine Dean
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Dan Goldman
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Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



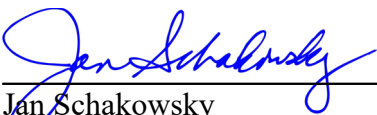
Betty McCollum
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Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



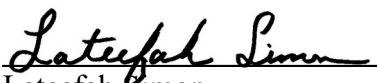
Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



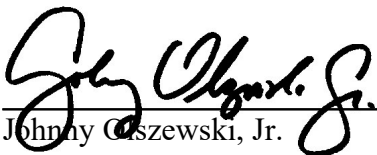
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



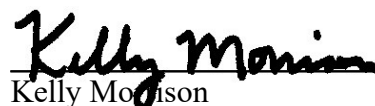
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Member of Congress



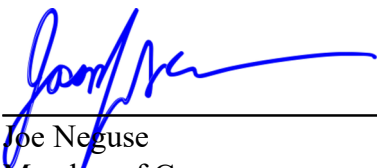
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Member of Congress



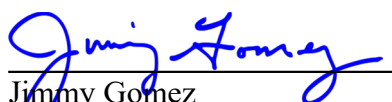
Kelly Morrison
Member of Congress



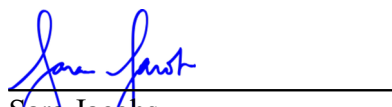
Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

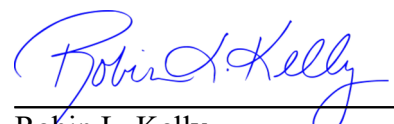


George Latimer
Member of Congress

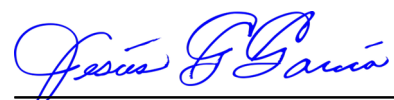

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Member of Congress


Angie Craig
Member of Congress

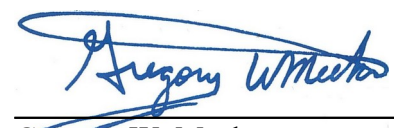

Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress

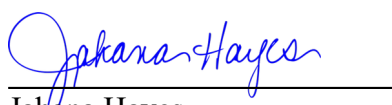

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Member of Congress


John Garamendi
Member of Congress


Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress


James R. Walkinshaw
Member of Congress


Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress


Jahana Hayes
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