



October 7, 2020

Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Department of Health and Human Services

Re: Forced Sterilizations in ICE Detention Centers

The recent human rights violations that have come to light via whistleblower complaint from a private Georgia ICE detention center are alarming to say the least. According to the report, multiple undocumented women in the custody of ICE reported having hysterectomies without an understanding of the procedure or why they received one. In 2014 the UN published a statement called “Eliminating forced, coercive and otherwise involuntary sterilization” and these actions are clearly defined as a violation of human rights including - but not limited to - the right to health, the right to information, the right to privacy, the right to be free from discrimination, and the right to decide the spacing and number of children.

While deplorable, these practices are not new. The United States has a long and tragic history with forced sterilization, particularly in populations deemed “undesirable.” Tens of thousands of Americans were forcibly sterilized in the 20th century, many being performed on Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, poor and immigrant communities, and people with disabilities. While state-sponsored sterilizations have ceased, this most recent example demonstrates this did not indicate the end of eugenic practice in the US.

First 5 Alameda County strongly condemns the actions laid out in the whistleblower report. As reflected in our [Resolution on Immigration](#), First 5 Alameda County is committed to advocating for just policies and practices that protect immigrant families. Our commitment includes training service providers and partners on immigration policies and resources, supporting sanctuary city and safe haven policies, and providing trustworthy information to early childhood educators, community organizations, and partners and families. About a third of Alameda County residents are foreign-born, and over half of children 0-17 in our county live with at least one parent born outside of the US. We believe that unjust immigration policy and practice threaten the safety, development, and health of young children and their families in Alameda County and across the country.

First 5 Alameda County supports the rights of immigrant women to maintain bodily autonomy and make their own reproductive decisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kristin Spanos".

Kristin Spanos
Chief Executive Officer
First 5 Alameda County

CC:

Senator Dianne Feinstein

Senator Kamala Harris

Representative Barbara Lee

Representative Eric Swalwell

Representative Ro Khanna

Melissa Stafford-Jones, Executive Director, First 5 Association

Margot Grant-Gould, Policy Director, First 5 Association of California

First 5 Alameda County Commissioner Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan

Alameda County Supervisor Richard Valle, Board President

Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, Chair, Personnel Administration Legislation Committee