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October 20, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mullin,

I write to express my serious concern regarding the detention and treatment of Dr. Ann Lawani, a longtime resident of Lodi, California, who was abruptly taken from her home by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and transported thousands of miles from her family and community to an ICE detention facility in Louisiana. Dr. Lawani has no criminal history and has spent more than a decade serving her community as a nurse, educator, and caregiver. Her detention raises serious questions about the Department's enforcement priorities and its treatment of individuals who pose no threat to public safety. I urge you to immediately release Dr. Lawani under appropriate supervision and facilitate her return to California while her legal proceedings continue.

For thirteen years, Dr. Lawani has lived openly in Lodi, maintained federally authorized employment, and complied with immigration requirements. An immigration judge also granted her withholding of removal to Nigeria after finding that she would likely face persecution there. Despite her longstanding compliance, ICE agents arrested her at her home without prior notice and transferred her through multiple states to a detention facility in Louisiana. During these transfers, her whereabouts were not reflected in ICE's online detainee locator, leaving her family and attorney struggling to locate her. ICE has also reportedly pursued her removal to an undisclosed third country without providing her or her attorney with the relevant documentation. These circumstances raise serious concerns about due process, transparency, and the justification for her continued detention.

The harm caused by Dr. Lawani's detention extends well beyond her family. At the University of San Francisco, she oversees the education of 230 nursing students, coordinates 51 faculty members, and manages partnerships with 38 clinical sites. She also practices as a nurse at John Muir Health and cares for her 83-year-old father. According to the university's Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Professions, her sudden absence has already interrupted student assessments, stalled curriculum development, and jeopardized accreditation requirements. At a time when our communities need dedicated healthcare workers and qualified nursing educators, ICE has instead removed one from the very people who rely on her.

More broadly, Dr. Lawani's case raises a fundamental question about the Department's enforcement priorities. Americans expect ICE to focus its resources on individuals who pose genuine threats to public safety. Instead, federal agents have devoted significant resources to detaining and transporting individuals like Dr. Lawani, who have no criminal history. Her case illustrates the troubling consequences of an enforcement approach that fails to adequately distinguish between individuals who threaten our communities and those who help sustain them.

A federal judge has ordered that Dr. Lawani not be removed while her habeas petition remains pending. Given her longstanding compliance, lack of criminal history, and substantial community ties, there is no apparent public safety justification for keeping her detained thousands of miles from home while her case proceeds. I therefore urge you to direct ICE to release Dr. Lawani under an order of supervision and facilitate her immediate return to California while her legal proceedings continue. I also request that DHS provide her and her attorney with the proposed country of removal, supporting travel documentation, and an explanation of the basis for her continued detention.

Our immigration enforcement system should focus on protecting communities from danger, not removing the individuals who dedicate their lives to serving them. Dr. Lawani's continued detention undermines that mission while imposing unnecessary harm on her family and the countless people who depend on her. I ask that you give this matter your immediate attention and provide a prompt response.

Sincerely,

Josh Harder

Josh Harder
Member of Congress