



July 23, 2026

England Economic & Industrial Development District  
England Authority Board of Commissioners  
1611 Arnold Drive  
Alexandria, LA 71303

Dear Members of the England Economic & Industrial Development District ("England Airpark")  
Board of Commissioners:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our urgent concern regarding the life-threatening harm that would result if the proposed Alexandria Child Detention Center becomes operational. Alongside members of the Central Louisiana community, we urge you to reconsider your February 23, 2026 decision authorizing the England Airpark Executive Director to execute new contracts with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the LaSalle Family Foundation, an affiliate of LaSalle Corrections.

The proposed ICE facility in Alexandria, Louisiana, raises profound concerns for advocates, faith leaders, healthcare professionals, and communities committed to protecting human rights. Connected to the Alexandria International Airport, the facility would serve as a detention and deportation hub for immigrant families and unaccompanied children. Expanding the federal government's family detention and deportation system without careful scrutiny is unacceptable.

I. This Is a Detention Center Operating as a Punitive Carceral Facility—Not a Residential Humanitarian Center

The proposed facility is slated to be operated by the LaSalle Family Foundation, an organization with direct ties to LaSalle Corrections, a private prison company repeatedly criticized for allegations of abuse, retaliation, and neglect. Reports of human rights abuses in LaSalle-operated ICE facilities, including allegations of invasive, nonconsensual gynecological procedures, raise serious questions about the organization's ability to protect the dignity, health,

and well-being of any children and families consigned to its custody.<sup>1</sup> Since this Board voted to approve the new family and child facility in February, two men in their forties died while detained at a nearby detention center operated by LaSalle Corrections.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the National Police Accountability Project estimated that [51 deaths – many due to medical neglect](#) – occurred in LaSalle-operated facilities just between 2014 and 2022; deaths on LaSalle’s watch include a [man who was left seizing](#) for 36 hours, a [woman who was denied prescription medication](#) and who died emaciated and writhing in pain, and [a man who was maced](#) and beaten to death. An organization with this record is unfit to oversee their care.

Compass Connections, the organization presented as the project’s principal humanitarian partner, has withdrawn from participation in the project thereby heightening concerns about the treatment and safety of children and families who would be detained at this facility.<sup>3</sup> In light of this material change, the England Economic & Industrial Development District Board of Commissioners should immediately reconsider its support of this project. Children and families should never be placed in the care of an organization with a documented history of abuse, [especially without meaningful independent oversight](#).

You were led to believe this project would create a humane facility for families. It will not. It is a detention center. There is no meaningful distinction between what is proposed for Alexandria and what has occurred at the Family Detention Center in Dilley, Texas. Despite promises of being "an appropriate setting for a family population" and "an open and safe environment," Dilley has become nationally known for the mistreatment of detained children and families.<sup>4</sup> That is not the legacy the people of Dilley wanted for their community,<sup>5</sup> and it should not become the legacy of Alexandria.

Public records obtained by advocates demonstrate that the draft Intergovernmental Service Agreement (IGSA)—which was not finalized when the Board voted to approve the

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<sup>1</sup> See Office of Inspector General, *Results of an Unannounced Inspection of Winn Correctional Center in Winnfield, Louisiana*, Department of Homeland Security (June 2, 2026), <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2026-06/OIG-26-08-Jun26.pdf> (detailing use of force and conditions deficiencies at the facility).

<sup>2</sup> See Ryan J. Foley, *ICE facility in Louisiana reports its second detainee death in less than 2 months*, Associated Press (June 8, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/ice-detainee-death-winn-a1ab66753aa4a1effdf0b7abef2240f>.

<sup>3</sup> Jack Brook, *A new ICE facility could speed up deportations for families and kids*, Associated Press (July 6, 2026), <https://www.ap.org/news-highlights/elections/2026/a-new-ice-facility-could-speed-up-deportations-for-families-and-kids> (noting that Compass Connections was “no longer involved” in the Alexandria Child Detention Center project).

<sup>4</sup> See Human Rights First & RAICES, *A New Era of ICE Family Prisons* (April 1, 2026), <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/library/a-new-era-of-ice-family-prisons>.

<sup>5</sup> See Alyssa Ousler, *‘Horror on a shocking scale’: resurgent US movement calls for end to family ICE detention*, The Guardian (February 23, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/23/protest-movement-family-children-ice-detention-trump>.

project—repeatedly and explicitly describes the proposed operation as a “detention facility.” For example, the draft contract:

- States in its opening sentence that the agreement exists for the "detention and care of detained aliens," also referred to as "detainees" or "inmates."
- Requires the service provider to perform "other detention services" in addition to providing housing.
- Uses the term "detained" in Article 1.A on the first page.
- References "detention transportation" in Attachment 7.
- References a "detention floor plan" in Attachment 13.
- States in Section A that the service provider will provide "ICE alien detention in a secure environment."
- Repeatedly refers to individuals housed at the facility as persons "in ICE custody" and "ICE-detained aliens."
- Requires compliance with ICE civil detention standards.

Additionally, recordings of the February Board meeting reflect discussion that children and families would not be transported on commercial flights, but instead on flights ICE uses for deportation operations. Taken together, these facts demonstrate that the proposed project is, by design and operation, an immigration detention center—not a “humanitarian residential facility.”

## II. This Facility Poses Significant Environmental and Public Health Risks to Detained Children and Families, Construction Workers, and Facility Staff.

The proposed detention facility is located on one of the most environmentally contaminated sites in the country. Proceeding with construction and operation before completing the necessary environmental review places detained children and families, construction workers, facility employees, and the surrounding community at unnecessary risk.

### *A. The proposed facility is to be located atop a site contaminated by PFAS and other dangerous organic compounds.*

The proposed facility is located atop one of the nation's most PFAS-contaminated sites and the Airpark has a documented history of environmental contamination.<sup>6</sup> As a result, children and families detained at this location could be exposed to significant environmental hazards. Available information indicates that concentrations of PFAS ("forever chemicals") at portions of the site are reported to be at least 575,000 times higher than the current federal drinking water limit.<sup>7</sup> Exposure to elevated levels of PFAS has been associated with serious adverse health effects, including reproductive harm, developmental delays in children, increased risk of certain

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<sup>6</sup> Tom Perkins, *ICE planning facility for children and families on Pfas-contaminated site*, The Guardian (April 25, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/apr/25/pfas-chemicals-ice-family-detention>.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*, citing the Environmental Working Group's summaries of data obtained from the Department of Defense.

cancers, immune system suppression, disruption of hormone function, and elevated cholesterol levels.<sup>8</sup>

The Board should determine whether this project will interfere with existing environmental monitoring. Questions that need answers include: Will ICE's proposed development disturb or require relocation of existing groundwater monitoring wells? If so, has ICE obtained the necessary approvals from both the U.S. Air Force and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) before proceeding?

In addition to the PFAS contamination, this property is known to contain volatile and carcinogenic organic compounds, including trichloroethylene (TCE).<sup>9</sup> The surrounding area has also experienced significant environmental contamination. For example, nearby facilities—including the Dresser facility in Pineville—have been the subject of LDEQ investigations and litigation concerning groundwater contamination and remediation.<sup>10</sup>

Several Solid Waste Management Units (SWMUs) with known contamination appear to overlap or lie adjacent to the proposed staging area. These include:

- SWMU 41: Closed landfill with contaminant concentrations exceeding applicable screening levels.
- SWMU 332: Groundwater plume with contaminant concentrations above applicable screening levels.
- SWMUs 29, 38, 58, and 332: Documented PFOS/PFOA impacts.

*B. The proposed facility consists of buildings containing asbestos.*

The proposed renovations also raise serious concerns about asbestos exposure. As the Board itself noted at the February 2026 Board Meeting, the buildings slated for renovation contain asbestos, which can release hazardous fibers when disturbed and cause serious respiratory disease.<sup>11</sup> Louisiana Administrative Code § 33.5151 governs asbestos handling during renovation, and details strict procedures for the handling and disposal of this harmful contaminant. Construction workers deserve full transparency about these risks, and the Board should explain how workers are being informed and protected throughout the project.

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<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., *Our Current Understanding of the Human Health and Environmental Risks of PFAS*, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas> (last accessed July 22, 2026).

<sup>9</sup> Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, *Toxicological Profile for Trichloroethylene* (June 2019), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK597619/> (noting that “[r]elatively short-term exposure” to the chemical caused “harmful effects on the nervous system, liver, respiratory system, kidneys, blood, immune system, heart, and body weight” in animals and that “[t]here is strong evidence that trichloroethylene can cause kidney cancer in people and some evidence that it causes liver cancer and malignant lymphoma (a blood cancer).”)

<sup>10</sup> *Dresser Pineville Site*, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, <https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/dresser-pineville-site-remediation> (last accessed July 22, 2026).

<sup>11</sup> *Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Health Effects of Asbestos*, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/asbestos/health-effects/index.html> (last accessed July 22, 2026).

Given the known environmental contamination at the proposed site, the absence of a completed environmental review raises significant concerns regarding the safety of everyone who may work at, be detained in, or otherwise be exposed to this facility. Before any construction or operation proceeds, these environmental risks should be fully evaluated, publicly disclosed, and appropriately addressed.

### III. The England Authority Board Is Accountable to the Public and Has a Duty to Act in the Public Interest.

The England Economic & Industrial Development District is a public body entrusted with exercising its authority for the benefit of the people and the improvement of their health, safety, and living conditions. By accepting appointment to this Board, you assumed responsibility for the consequences of your decisions. That responsibility cannot be delegated to the officials who appointed you or to federal agencies.

This Board voted to authorize these contracts. Since that vote, the facts have changed. Compass Connections has withdrawn, the contracts have been materially revised, and the project has advanced without the required environmental review. These developments demand the Board's reconsideration.

The Board approved this project before the contracts were finalized and despite unresolved environmental concerns at a site with a well-documented history of contamination, including PFAS and other hazardous substances. *See supra* Section II. Moving forward before completing the necessary environmental review puts construction workers, employees, detained children and families, and the Board itself at unnecessary risk of exposure to these dangerous substances.

The Board has a fiduciary duty to protect the public welfare. While we recognize that the Board is charged with promoting the development of the England Airpark, that responsibility is not to be undertaken at the expense of any other considerations. Louisiana law expressly recognizes that the Board's powers must be exercised in a manner that protects the public health and welfare. *See* La. R.S. 33:130.35(9). Simply put, approving this project under these circumstances is inconsistent with that obligation.

The Board must also consider its potential legal and financial exposure. Given the well-documented history of environmental contamination at the site, proceeding with construction and operation before the completion of the appropriate environmental review processes could expose construction workers, facility employees, detained children and families, and ultimately the Board and community members themselves to significant risks. If individuals are harmed as a result of exposure to known environmental hazards, the Board could face substantial legal and financial liability.

Your authority to approve this project carries an obligation to correct course when new information shows the decision no longer serves the public interest. We urge you to rescind your prior approval and cancel these contracts before irreversible harm is done.

#### IV. The Detention of Children and Families Is Inherently Harmful, and This Facility Would Exacerbate Those Harms.

Although all forms of immigrant detention are unnecessary and inhumane, the detention of children and families is particularly harmful. A substantial body of evidence has documented the profound physical and psychological effects that *any* period of detention has on children, many of whom have already experienced significant trauma before arriving in the United States.<sup>12</sup> There is also a significant likelihood that U.S. citizen children will be detained at the proposed facility, either because they are arrested with their noncitizen parent or because they are being deported—consensually or not—with their parent.<sup>13</sup>

Detention inflicts lasting harm on children. Research has consistently linked it to developmental delays, post-traumatic stress disorder, severe weight loss, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, acute illness, and other serious physical and mental health conditions.<sup>14</sup> Recent federal policy changes heighten these concerns. By the end of this month, tens of thousands of unaccompanied children are expected to lose their congressionally authorized access to legal representation, increasing the risk of expedited deportation.<sup>15</sup> The development of this facility raises the alarming prospect that children fleeing violence, persecution, or trafficking, could be detained and returned to the very dangers they escaped, contrary to the international principle of non-refoulement - that individuals seeking refuge from persecution or serious harm should not be returned to the places from which they fled.

Though *any* period of detention is harmful for children, this facility poses a risk of lengthy periods of confinement: recent detention trends undermine assurances that this facility would serve only as a temporary holding center. ICE is currently obfuscating data on the average length of time children spend in detention, but [recent legal filings](#) document months-long periods in custody, including one instance where a child had spent 323 days in detention – far exceeding the legal limit of 20 days.<sup>16</sup> Those same filings also document how “[g]uards routinely abuse,

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<sup>12</sup> Isabella Priestly, et. al., *The impact of immigration detention on children’s mental health: systematic review*, The British Journal of Psychiatry (April 10, 2025), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12628124/> (“Immigration detention harms children. No period of detention can be deemed safe, as all immigration detention is associated with adverse impacts on mental health.”)

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Order, *Mack v. Harper*, No. 1:25-cv-550, at 2 (W.D. La. Apr. 24, 2025) (noting the court’s “strong suspicion that the Government [] deported a U.S. Citizen with no meaningful process”).

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Julie M. Linton, M.D., et. al., *Detention of Immigrant Children*, Pediatrics (May 2017), <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/139/5/e20170483/38727/Detention-of-Immigrant-Children?utologincheck=redirected> (Policy statement of the American Academy of Pediatrics, reaffirmed in 2022, documenting extensive evidence of the harmful effects of detention on children and including as one of its recommendations “Eliminate exposure to conditions or settings that may retraumatize children, such as those that currently exist in detention, or detention itself.”).

<sup>15</sup> Alexandra Villareal, *Thousands of immigrant children risk losing lawyers after Trump aid cuts*, The Guardian (July 22, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jul/22/immigrant-children-trump-cuts>.

<sup>16</sup> Whitney Curry Wimbish, *Trump Administration Routinely Violating Immigrant Children’s Rights*, The American Prospect (July 20, 2026), <https://prospect.org/2026/07/20/trump-administration-routinely-violating-immigrant-childrens-rights/>.

neglect, and torment children at Dilley.”<sup>17</sup> No child or family should be held in an ICE facility, particularly one with the environmental and operational concerns outlined above.

Immediate cancellation of this project is necessary to protect the health, safety, and dignity of detained children and families and to uphold basic human rights standards. Placing vulnerable children and families in a facility with documented environmental hazards and within a detention system repeatedly criticized for abusive conditions is incompatible with these obligations.

The Board was led to believe this project would provide humanitarian services for immigrant children and families. The record now shows otherwise. This is not a humanitarian residential facility—it is an immigration detention center that would expand the detention and deportation infrastructure at the England Airpark.

We urge the Board to rescind its support, cancel the contracts with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the LaSalle Family Foundation, and halt further development of this proposed ICE detention facility. This project risks subjecting vulnerable children and families to unnecessary detention, potential abuse, and documented environmental hazards.

The Board still has the opportunity—and the responsibility—to prevent this harm before it is too late.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Louisiana

ALAS

Baton Rouge Democratic Socialists of America

Center for Muslim Engagement

First Grace Community Alliance (Project Ishmael & Hagar’s House)

Home is Here NOLA

Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy (ISLA)

Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention

Matriz y Mar (MYM)

National Immigration Project

Palestinian Youth Movement New Orleans (PYM)

Singing Resistance NOLA

Voice of the Experienced (VOTE)

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<sup>17</sup> *Id.*