



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2020

The Honorable William Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Mr. James McHenry
Director
Executive Office for Immigration Review
5107 Leesburg Pike, 18th Floor
Falls Church, VA 22041

Dear Attorney General Barr and Director McHenry:

As the nation confronts the novel coronavirus, which as of today has infected nearly 17,000 Americans, the Trump Administration has urged that people work from home whenever possible.¹ Guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention instructed all employers to be “ready to implement strategies to protect their workforce from COVID-19 while ensuring continuity of operations,” to include telecommuting or other policies to ensure physical distance among employees and between employees and others.²

Although the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) has postponed all non-detained master calendar hearings and temporarily closed a few immigration courts,³ over 50 immigration courts remain open,⁴ including immigration courts in California, Connecticut, Illinois, and New York, which are under statewide ‘stay at home’ orders. Keeping these courts open puts the judges, court staff, and the public they serve at unnecessary risk. Moreover, refusal to close the courts goes directly

¹ The White House, *The President’s Coronavirus Guidelines for America* (Mar. 16, 2020), https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf.

² The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers*, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>.

³ Tweet by the Department of Justice, Executive Office for Immigration Review (Mar. 17, 2020), https://twitter.com/DOJ_FOIR/status/1240124718298038273.

⁴ The Department of Justice, *EOIR Operational Status During Coronavirus Pandemic*, <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/eoir-operational-status-during-coronavirus-pandemic>.

against the guidance issued by the President, his Administration, and state officials' efforts to implement this guidance and protect the American people.

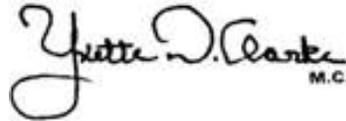
We implore you to immediately close all immigration courts across the country and transition to telecommuting. We must work together to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health and safety of everyone in our communities.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress