

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: To DHS IG: Investigate alleged forced hysterectomies at ICE facility

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and her colleagues are calling on the Department of Homeland Security’s inspector general to expeditiously investigate a whistleblower complaint alleging forced hysterectomies at the Irwin County Detention Center (ICDC) in Ocilla, Georgia. The letter was led by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Patty Murray (D-WA), Bob Casey (D-PA) and Cory Booker (D-NJ).

*“Forced sterilizations infringe on reproductive rights and autonomy,” **the senators wrote.** “To understand whether such violations may have been committed against immigrants in our federal government’s custody, the Inspector General’s Office should immediately investigate the reproductive health policies and practices at the ICDC and at other facilities, including but not limited to, all instances of forced, coerced, or medically unnecessary hysterectomies.”*

In addition to Senators Baldwin, Feinstein, Leahy, Murray, Casey and Booker, the letter was signed by Senators Charles E. Schumer (D-NY), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Tom Udall (D-NM), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Angus King (I-ME), Tina Smith (D-MN), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Chris Coons (D-DE), Mark R. Warner (D-VA), Jack Reed (D-RI), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Tom Carper (D-DE), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Kamala D. Harris (D-CA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Gary Peters (D-MI) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI).

Full text of the [letter](#) is below. An online version of this release is available [here](#).

Dear Mr. Cuffari:

The Department of Homeland Security's Office of the Inspector General should expeditiously conduct a thorough investigation into a whistleblower complaint alleging forced hysterectomies and other egregious abuses at the Irwin County Detention Center (ICDC) in Ocilla, Georgia. LaSalle Corrections operates that facility for the federal government, including for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The alleged abuses detailed in the complaint and in related reports must be thoroughly and swiftly investigated to protect the rights and safety of women and patients in our nation's care.

The whistleblower expressed alarm about the "rate at which the hysterectomies have occurred" at the facility. Specifically, the complaint alleges that between October and December 2019 at least five women detained at the ICDC received hysterectomies. When asked about the procedures, however, the women "reacted confused when explaining why they had one done." The complaint also describes how a gynecologist once removed the wrong ovary on a young woman, causing her "to go back to take out the left and she wound up with a total hysterectomy," leaving her unable to bear children.

Another detained woman who received a hysterectomy recounted that medical personnel "did not properly explain to her what procedure she was going to have done." Although she asked for more information about why she was receiving a hysterectomy, she was "given three different responses by three different individuals." When the woman told a nurse that the procedure "isn't for me," the nurse "responded by getting angry and agitated."

Forced sterilizations infringe on reproductive rights and autonomy. To understand whether such violations may have been committed against immigrants in our federal government's custody, the Inspector General's Office should immediately investigate the reproductive health policies and practices at the ICDC and at other ICE facilities, including but not limited to, all instances of forced, coerced, or medically unnecessary hysterectomies.

In addition to thoroughly investigating the recent alleged abuses at the ICDC, we urge you to immediately conduct a national review of reproductive health policies and practices at ICE facilities to ensure that the human rights of women in federal immigration custody are assured.

Sincerely,