



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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ICYMI: Governor Shapiro Meets with Local Leaders from Berks and Schuylkill Counties to Discuss Anticipated Harm Caused by ICE Detention Centers on Local Communities in Pennsylvania

Elected officials from Berks and Schuylkill Counties, on both sides of the aisle, have spoken out against the federal government's secret purchase of warehouses in Pennsylvania and plans to convert them to mass immigration detention centers.

Earlier this month, Governor Shapiro and Administration leaders sent letters to DHS Secretary Kristi Noem, detailing the harm ICE detention centers would cause in local communities.

These ICE detention centers pose serious health, safety, and economic risks to local communities – and the Shapiro Administration will aggressively pursue all options to stop them.

Watch Governor Shapiro's message to Pennsylvanians [here](#).

Leesport, PA – Yesterday, **Governor Josh Shapiro** joined **Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Dr. Debra Bogen**, **Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) Secretary Nancy A. Walker**, and **senior leaders from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)** at a meeting with local officials to discuss the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)'s plans to convert two recently purchased commercial warehouses into mass immigration detention centers in Pennsylvania.

The Governor convened the discussion with local elected officials and community leaders from Berks and Schuylkill counties, the counties where DHS has planned to

operate Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers in the Commonwealth. Despite bipartisan opposition, the Trump Administration has repeatedly ignored the concerns from these local officials, who know their communities best.

“While the federal government ignores Pennsylvanians and their local leaders, I remain committed to protecting the interests of every resident of our Commonwealth,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “We do not want these detention centers in our communities – they pose serious health, safety, and economic risks to the people of Berks and Schuylkill counties. If the federal government continues to move forward with these plans, my Administration will aggressively pursue every option to prevent these facilities from opening and needlessly harming the good people of Pennsylvania.”

Earlier this month, Governor Shapiro and leaders in his Administration [sent two separate letters](#) to Secretary Noem, outlining DHS’ potential violations of several Pennsylvania laws and detailing the harm these ICE detention centers would cause to communities in the Commonwealth.

In Berks County, DHS has proposed an ICE detention center in Upper Bern Township, which public reports have indicated would be used to hold up to 1,500 people. This would effectively double the Township’s population and cause a number of harms:

- **Burdening Local Infrastructure:** With such a significant increase in population, local infrastructure would be seriously overburdened, including the sudden production of up to 14 times the legally permitted amount of sewage, overwhelming the local water treatment plant and water pipe infrastructure.
- **Threatening Public Safety:** Upper Bern Township is served by a single volunteer fire department and depends entirely on the Pennsylvania State Police for police services with only two acute care hospitals nearby. Doubling the township’s population would immediately threaten residents’ ability to receive help in times of emergency.
- **Taking Money From Pennsylvanians’ Pockets:** DHS’ proposed detention center would cost an estimated \$800,000+ annually in lost property tax revenue, depriving the community of critical resources — including a \$199,620 loss for Berks County and \$31,229 loss for Upper Bern Township, to a \$597,110 loss for the Hamburg Area School District.

In Schuylkill County, DHS has proposed an ICE detention center in Tremont Township, which public reports have indicated would be used to hold up to 7,500 people. Likewise, those plans would cause significant harm to the local community:

- **Jeopardizing Health and Safety:** Served by a single ambulance company and five fire departments from surrounding communities, with only three acute care centers in all of Schuylkill County, suddenly increasing the population with detainees would leave residents vulnerable in times of critical need.
- **Draining the Community’s Water Supply:** The proposed facility could require up to 800,000 gallons of water per day — more than double the system’s current

capacity — potentially draining the community’s reservoir in a single day, leaving homes without water and lives at risk in case of fire.

- **Taking Money From Pennsylvanians’ Pockets:** The Tremont Township detention center would cost an estimated \$1 million annually in lost property tax revenue — including a \$222,574.31 loss for Schuylkill County and \$195,953.73 loss for Tremont Township, to a \$555,630.01 loss for Pine Grove Area School District.

These proposed detention centers would jeopardize the health and safety of the Pennsylvanians who live nearby, overburden local infrastructure and emergency response personnel, and deprive communities of needed tax revenue.

“The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has serious concerns about the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s plan to use warehouses across the Commonwealth to hold hundreds or thousands of people that these sites were never designed to accommodate. From environmental protection and public health perspectives, these facilities do not have the water and sewer infrastructure to safely provide for that many people. ICE’s use of the warehouses would far exceed the safe limits for local sewage systems and would severely impact local water systems’ ability to provide clean drinking water and fire protection to their communities,” said **DEP Secretary Jessica Shirley**. “Environmental protection and public safety cannot be afterthoughts in the pursuit of political posturing, and the Shapiro Administration opposes ICE detention centers that will clearly harm Pennsylvanians and our environment.”

“First responders and staff in local hospitals focus on providing quality and timely care for residents despite workforce challenges in rural communities,” said **Health Secretary Dr. Debra Bogen**. “Before housing thousands of people in these large facilities, the federal government needs to invest in creating the public safety and medical infrastructure necessary to provide quality care for people and staff at these proposed facilities and ensure services continue unaffected in the surrounding Berks and Schuylkill County communities.”

“Public safety must come first, and that starts with making sure any facility that plans to house people is built, renovated, and operated to meet the standards designed to keep everyone safe. These sites were purchased as commercial warehouses, and any change to an institutional use brings serious fire and life safety requirements under nationally recognized building codes as well as state and local rules,” said **L&I Secretary Nancy A. Walker**. “That is why the Department of Labor & Industry is requesting that federal DHS submit complete plans for the Tremont and Upper Bern facilities for our review. We will continue working with our partners to ensure decisions are made in accordance with the law and focused on the safety of the people involved.”

If it follows through, the federal government will have knowingly created chaos, inflicted harm, and burdened Pennsylvanians.

Following yesterday's roundtable discussion, **Governor Shapiro** reiterated his commitment to protecting the health and safety of Pennsylvanians — particularly those who live near the proposed facilities — and further committed to aggressively pursuing every option available to his Administration, to prevent DHS from converting Pennsylvania's warehouses into ICE detention centers.

Here's what Pennsylvanians are reading and watching about the Governor's update on proposed ICE detention centers in the Commonwealth:

[Reading Eagle: Shapiro pledges to 'use every tool' to stop ICE detention centers in Berks, Schuylkill](#)

[Philadelphia Inquirer: An angry Josh Shapiro pledges to block ICE detention centers in Pa.](#)

[Pennsylvania Capital Star: Gov. Shapiro promises to fight proposed ICE detention centers in Pennsylvania](#)

[Tribune Democrat: Shapiro vows to 'use every tool' to thwart planned DHS detention centers in Pa.](#)

[Keystone Newsroom: Shapiro hints at permit denial to stop Pa. ICE detention centers](#)

[Lebanon Daily News: Shapiro says PA will fight ICE over PA warehouse detention centers](#)

[City & State PA: Gov. Shapiro vows to use 'every tool' to stop ICE facilities from coming to Pennsylvania](#)

[Politics PA: Shapiro Says No to ICE Detention Facilities in PA](#)

[Bucks County Beacon: Governor Shapiro Doubles Down on Opposition to ICE Detention Centers Proposed in Pennsylvania After Visit With Berks and Schuylkill County Leaders](#)

[State Affairs: Shapiro vows to fight ICE plans for massive detention centers in Pennsylvania](#)

[Spotlight PA: Shapiro vows to block ICE detention centers, warns of devastating impact on local Pa. communities](#)

[PennLive: ICE is a 'failed mission,' Shapiro says, vowing to block detention centers in Pa.](#)

[CBS 3: Shapiro administration will "aggressively pursue every option" to keep ICE facilities from opening in Pennsylvania](#)

[ABC 27: Shapiro gives update on proposed Pennsylvania ICE detention centers](#)

[CBS 21: Governor says PA community would 'literally run out of water' with ICE detention center](#)

[WGAL: Gov. Shapiro aims to block ICE facilities in Berks and Schuylkill counties](#)

[NBC 10: Gov. Shapiro aims to fight against proposed ICE detention centers in Pennsylvania](#)

[WGAL: Gov. Shapiro aims to block ICE facilities in Berks and Schuylkill counties](#)

[CBS 3: Gov. Shapiro wants to keep ICE facilities from opening in Pennsylvania](#)

[WFMZ: 'They won't be able to flush the toilet': Shapiro says proposed ICE facilities present challenges to small towns' resources](#)

[WENY: Shapiro Fighting Two ICE Facility Projects](#)

[KYW Newsradio: Gov. Shapiro vows to fight federal plans to turn 2 Pennsylvania warehouses into ICE detention centers](#)

Watch Governor Shapiro's message to Pennsylvanians [here](#).

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