

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

We are a group of concerned MN residents and organizations joining the No Detention Centers in Michigan coalition to demand that Prudential Financial, Inc. immediately divest from The GEO Group, Inc. and all other private prison companies.

By investing in The GEO Group, you and your customers directly profit off of the imprisonment of tens of thousands of people. The GEO Group has been subject to many lawsuits regarding inhumane conditions, improper medical care, torture, forced labor, sexual abuse, and deaths at their facilities. More information about The GEO Group is attached to this letter.

Furthermore, private detention centers run by The GEO Group and other companies play a central role in the persecution of immigrants in the United States; today over 60% of people in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention are held in private facilities, with The GEO Group being the largest ICE contractor. We do not want our life insurance, mutual funds, and retirement funds to support these atrocities.

This year, JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, SunTrust, BNP Paribas, FifthThird Bank, and PNC Bank have all made firm commitments to stop financing the private prison industry. While the nature of your company's ties to the industry is different (holding stock vs providing credit), the moral imperative to sever ties is the same.

In the name of human rights, we demand that you divest, and our protests will continue until you do so. You are one of the largest holders of The GEO Group stock and are in a position to make a real impact.

Sincerely,

## About The GEO Group, Inc.

GEO Group is a multi-billion-dollar corporation headquartered in Boca Raton, Florida, and the second-largest for-profit prison operator in the United States. Its notoriety has grown in recent years as it takes in hundreds of millions of dollars annually through contracts with ICE to run concentration camps; but GEO already had an exhaustively documented history of violence and corruption stretching back to its founding in 1984. Since that time, GEO has profited from federal and state policies leading to a huge rise in incarceration and detention in the United States—an increase of more than 500 percent over thirty years—and its pursuit of revenue through imprisonment has gone hand in hand with widespread abuse, neglect, denial of medical services, riots, and dangerous working conditions. GEO has faced hundreds of lawsuits, many of them settled before trial. Here are just some of its known abuses:

### **1. GEO has been sued multiple times for forcing detainees to work for food.**

Washington State's Attorney General sued GEO in September 2017 for violating the state's minimum-wage laws by paying detained inmates \$1 a day or less. In December of the same year, California inmate Raul Novoa filed a legal complaint alleging that he and other inmates were forced to labor inside a GEO facility and that the company "maintains a corporate policy and uniform practice" of forcing inmates to work for \$1 per day, which they need to buy basic necessities such as "food, water, and hygiene products."

### **2. A GEO facility outside Los Angeles was named the "deadliest ICE detention center" of 2017.**

After 46-year-old detainee Vicente Caceres-Maradiaga died in GEO's custody at Adelanto Detention Center in June 2017—the facility's third death of that year—Javier Hernandez of the Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice stated: "*Adelanto is now the deadliest detention center of 2017. Long before this egregious distinction, Adelanto has been known as a facility where abuse and mismanagement persist.*"

### **3. The American Civil Liberties Union has accused GEO of torturing detainees in Colorado.**

According to an ACLU statement published in 2017, ICE agents at GEO's 1,500-bed Colorado detention center retaliated against Iraqi nationals who had joined an ACLU class-action lawsuit to stop the U.S. from deporting them. The ACLU reported that employees at the GEO facility were deliberately denying Iraqis food, water, and access to the restroom: "*Each of the detainees we interviewed provided accounts of mistreatment. These accounts were consistent, as was their palpable fear of death if ultimately deported to Iraq.*"

### **4. Sexual violence has been rampant at GEO facilities for decades.**

- In 2012, widespread abuse and sexual assault at the GEO-operated Walnut Grove Youth Correctional Facility in Lake County, Mississippi resulted in a settlement ensuring that juveniles would no longer be housed there. The facility was closed down permanently in September 2016.
- In 2007, seven young people incarcerated at the Coke County Juvenile Justice Center in Bronte, Texas sued GEO Group, alleging mental, physical, and sexual abuse from an employee. The claims were settled in mediation for \$1,500,000.
- In July 2004, LeTisha Tapia committed suicide at the GEO-operated Val Verde County Jail in Texas. Shortly before her death, Tapia had reported being raped and assaulted by male inmates housed in the same cellblock in addition to being sexually humiliated by a GEO guard. In March 2007, GEO settled with Tapia's family for \$200,000.
- In 1999, the state of Texas terminated GEO's \$12-million annual contract to run a jail in Travis County due to mismanagement that had included eleven guards and one case manager facing charges of sexually assaulting female inmates.

#### **Sources:**

[https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=GEO\\_Group](https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=GEO_Group)

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