



FIRST FRIENDS

of New Jersey & New York

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First Friends Response to Essex County Decision to End ICE Contract

First Friends of NJ & NY welcomes the news from the Essex County Executive and the Commissioners that Essex will no longer be incarcerating people for ICE by August 23rd at the latest. While First Friends supports any effort to remove ICE from our communities and end detention, our ultimate goal is for everyone in detention to be released, not transferred to other facilities. While we are disappointed to have learned of this through the press, it is our hope that Essex County will recognize its continuing responsibility to those in their custody. Towards this end, we urge them to partner closely with us and other immigrant rights organizations, attorneys, and family members to ensure that no matter what the transition will be, it will go as smoothly as possible. People in ICE detention should not be made to fear losing contact with family members, lawyers, or other service providers. Should our friends be transferred, we will do our best to stay in contact and keep our volunteer visitors and pen-pals informed. Now more than ever, our friends in detention at Essex will need the support of our staff, volunteers, and everyone in our community.

We also hope that the Essex County Executive and the Commissioners will join us in urging the New Jersey State Legislature to pass A5207/S3361 which will prohibit the renewal or expansion of current ICE contracts and prohibit the signing of new contracts. It is imperative if we are to end the inhumane, unjust, and unnecessary practice of immigration detention, that ICE cannot simply replace these detention beds with new contracts in our state. Lastly, we call on Hudson and Bergen Counties to join Essex and the counties across the country that are ending their contracts. All our friends deserve to be home, in their communities, surrounded by their families, not incarcerated indefinitely simply because of their immigration status.