



CLINIC'S Action Toolkit to Restore Ombudsman and Civil Rights Offices

Background: On March 21, 2025, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) closed three critical oversight offices: Office of Immigration Detention Ombudsman (OIDO), Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), and the CIS Ombudsman. These offices previously served as independent oversight bodies to address complaints, ensure transparency, and advocate for systemic improvements in immigration processes.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Ombudsman's Office was created by section 452 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (HSA). Congress set mandatory requirements by statute for the Ombudsman's Office to fulfill, including assisting individuals and employers resolve problems with USCIS. The 2024 Annual Report indicates that the Ombudsman's office received north of 30,000 inquiries during that year alone. The Ombudsman's Office is also required by law to produce an annual report to Congress by June 30 of each year, laying out recommendations to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of USCIS. Because these duties are required by statute, the administration's effort to close the agency is likely unlawful under the Homeland Security Act. Meanwhile, CRCL was created by section 345 of the HAS, and OIDO by section 106 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020.

These closures eliminate key avenues for accountability, leaving immigrants and advocates without recourse for abuse, delays, or injustice.

With an administration that attempts to operate with covert policies that are not transparent to the public, it is all the more critical to have an independent agency serve in a critical watchdog role. CLINIC Affiliates are uniquely harmed by the dissolution of the Ombudsman's office. Restoring these offices is essential for a fair and humane immigration system.

Key Messages:

- *Ombudsman offices ensure government accountability, transparency, and protection of civil rights.*
- *Their closure silences immigrants and obstructs justice.*
- *Congress and DHS must act now to restore and reinforce these critical offices.*
- *The closure of these offices will lead to more congressional constituent inquiries as well, meaning more work for congressional offices.*

Take Action

I. Engage your senators and representatives in Congress:

- Contact them by phone or email. To find your representatives click [here](#).
 - To call them, dial the U.S. Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121.
 - Suggested Script: *The closure of Department of Homeland Security ombudsman offices removes a critical safeguard for immigrants, families, and advocates. We urge you to act swiftly to restore these offices, which provide oversight, transparency, and a voice for the vulnerable. Without them, DHS operates without meaningful accountability.*
 - **Calls make more impact than emails, but any action helps.**
- Write letters to your senators and representatives. Use personal stories and data.
- Tag their social media accounts when posting content from this kit.
- Attend and make a public comment at their town halls and community.

Resources for contacting your representatives:

- Click here to find and contact the [House Homeland Security Committee Members](#).
- Click here to find and contact the [Senate Homeland Security Committee Members](#).
- **Sample Letter to a member of Congress:**

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[City, State, ZIP Code]

[Email Address]

[Phone Number]

[Date]

*The Honorable [Representative/Senator's Name]
[Office Address]
[City, State, ZIP Code]*

Re: Restore DHS Ombudsman Offices to Ensure Accountability and Public Trust

Dear [Representative/Senator] [Last Name],

I am writing to urge your leadership in addressing a critical gap in oversight and accountability within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) caused by the closure of key ombudsman offices, including the Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman (OIDO). These offices served as vital mechanisms to ensure transparency, efficiency, and good governance across DHS operations. Independent oversight is essential for maintaining public trust and ensuring that federal agencies fulfill their mandates responsibly and effectively. Without these offices, DHS lacks an impartial avenue to address operational inefficiencies, systemic failures, and public complaints. This gap not only jeopardizes the integrity of the agency but also weakens the public's confidence in the government's ability to manage complex systems with fairness and accountability.

To restore public trust and strengthen DHS operations, I urge Congress to take immediate action to:

- 1. Reaffirm Statutory Requirements:** *Ensure the administration is abiding by the explicit intent of Congress, as enshrined in law, for these offices to serve as transparent and impartial mechanisms for addressing systemic issues and improving agency accountability.*
- 2. Secure Sufficient Funding:** *Ensure that these offices are adequately resourced to operate effectively and independently, free from political interference.*
- 3. Hold Oversight Hearings:** *Investigate the impacts of these closures and ensure a pathway for the public to raise concerns and seek redress.*

Oversight is not a partisan issue; it is a foundational principle of effective governance. Reinstating the DHS ombudsman offices will enhance the agency's ability to respond to concerns, address inefficiencies, and uphold its commitment to the public.

I urge you to champion this critical issue and restore accountability mechanisms within DHS. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I would be glad to provide

additional information or discuss this issue further. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [Your Contact Information].

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Title/Organization, if applicable]

[Constituent of [City/State]]

- II. Write Op-Eds** - An op-ed (short for "opposite the editorial page") is a short, persuasive opinion piece written by a community member, expert, or stakeholder and published in a newspaper or online media outlet.

For more information on how to write an op-ed, visit CLINIC's [Op-Ed Tool](#).

III. Social Media

Key Hashtags

#restoreaccountability #bringbackoversight #protectimmigrantrights
#cisombudsmannow #bringbackOIDO #oversightmatters

Captions: Share stories of people harmed by lack of ombudsman intervention, and when possible use quotes or photos.

○ Examples:

- "Before DHS closed its ombudsman offices, immigrants had somewhere to turn. Now, complaints go unheard. The administration must restore these offices.
#restoreAccountability"
- TELL CONGRESS: DHS oversight should not be optional. Demand they restore the ombudsman offices. Email now 📧 [insert CongressPerson Email] #OversightMatters"

IV. Sign On Letters

Join CLINIC on this [Sign On Letter](#).