

**Statement for the Record**  
**U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary**  
**Nomination of Pam Bondi to be Attorney General of the United States**  
**January 17, 2025**

**Overview:** For over three decades, the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) has dedicated itself to ensuring human rights protections and access to justice for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. NIJC provides direct legal services to approximately 11,000 low-income individuals each year and advocates for these populations through federal advocacy, impact litigation, and public education.

NIJC respectfully submits this statement for the record on the Nomination of Pamela Jo Bondi to be Attorney General of the United States, and recommends that Senators oppose the nomination based on her problematic role as a lobbyist for the private prison industry.

**A confirmation would further boost profits for the private prison industry, which Ms. Bondi lobbied for.**

Former Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi served as the state's attorney general from 2011 to 2019, and is a registered lobbyist with the firm Ballard Partners. In her role with Ballard Partners, she worked as a lobbyist for the country's largest private prison company, GEO Group, as recently as 2019.<sup>1</sup>

The private prison industry plays a central role in the dramatic expansion of the immigrant detention system.<sup>2</sup> According to Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) own data, more than 90% of people detained in immigration detention are in facilities operated by private prison companies.<sup>3</sup> GEO Group is one of two private prison companies that have led this exponential

---

<sup>1</sup> Brian Ballard, founder of Ballard Partners, is a longtime fundraiser for Trump who raised over \$50 million for Trump-related committees and personally contributed \$250,000 during the 2024 election cycle. GEO Group donated \$1 million to the pro-Trump super PAC Make America Great Again. See Emma Rose Brown, *Trump administration profile: Pam Bondi*, Open Secrets (Dec. 20, 2024), [www.opensecrets.org/news/2024/12/trump-administration-profile-pam-bondi](https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2024/12/trump-administration-profile-pam-bondi).

<sup>2</sup> See Livia Luan, Migration Policy Institute, *Profiting from Enforcement: The Role of Private Prisons in U.S. Immigration Detention*, Migration Policy Institute (May 2, 2018), [www.migrationpolicy.org/article/profitting-enforcement-role-private-prisons-us-immigration-detention](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/profitting-enforcement-role-private-prisons-us-immigration-detention)

<sup>3</sup> See Eunice Cho, *Unchecked Growth: Private Prison Corporations and Immigration Detention, Three Years Into the Biden Administration*, American Civil Liberties Union, (Aug. 7, 2023), [www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/unchecked-growth-private-prison-corporations-and-immigration-detention-three-years-into-the-biden-administration](https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/unchecked-growth-private-prison-corporations-and-immigration-detention-three-years-into-the-biden-administration).

growth in the incarceration of immigrants. ICE contracts, for example, accounted for 42.7% of GEO Group's annual revenue in 2023.<sup>4</sup>

The private prison industry is poised to reap even greater profits under the incoming administration. Shortly after President Trump's election, GEO Group's founder described this outcome as a "potential sea change" and noted the company "was built for this unique moment in our history and the opportunities that it will bring."<sup>5</sup> GEO Group and other large private prison contracts such as CoreCivic have spoken openly with their shareholders about the importance of their government contracts to their bottom line, warning that policies that could reduce the government's reliance on detention threaten their business model.<sup>6</sup> GEO Group also has a subsidiary, BI Inc., which has lucrative contracts for electronic surveillance of immigrants.<sup>7</sup>

If confirmed as Attorney General, Ms. Bondi would be in charge of our nation's immigration courts and have the authority to certify cases appealed to the Board of Immigration Appeals. These certifications, in turn, would define the standards for relief and custody determinations, both of which can significantly impact the length of time individuals can remain in immigration detention. As President Trump's nominee, she is also poised to advance a mass detention and deportation agenda that would benefit her former client, GEO Group. This affiliation presents serious concerns as to Ms. Bondi's ability to perform her role as Attorney General and chief law enforcement officer with impartiality.

**Ms. Bondi's former client, GEO Group, profited 83 cents on every dollar paid by ICE to care for detained immigrants.**

ICE pays private contracts a per diem rate based on the number of immigrants it imprisons, which causes a gross incentive to increase harmful and wasteful immigration detention.<sup>8</sup> The

---

<sup>4</sup> See American Friends Service Committee, *The GEO Group Inc* (June 2022),

<https://investigate.afsc.org/company/geo-group>.

<sup>5</sup> Laura Romero and Peter Charalambous, *In Trump's mass deportation plan, the private prison industry sees a lucrative opportunity*, ABC News (Nov. 12, 2024),

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/trumps-deportation-plan-private-prison-industry-sees-lucrative/story?id=115775702>.

<sup>6</sup> See Julia Cusick, *How Private Prisons Are Profiting Under the Trump Administration*, Center for American Progress (Aug. 30, 2019),

[www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2019/08/30/473966/private-prisons-profiting-trump-administration](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2019/08/30/473966/private-prisons-profiting-trump-administration).

<sup>7</sup> See Freedom for Immigrants, *Profit Over People: FFI Condemns Private Prison Corporations Cashing in on Immigration Detention* (Dec. 16, 2024), [www.freedomforimmigrants.org/news/ffi-condemns-private-prisons](http://www.freedomforimmigrants.org/news/ffi-condemns-private-prisons). See also Katya Schwenk, *Private Prison Firms Set To Cash In On Immigrant Surveillance Boom*, The Lever (Dec. 2023),

[www.levernews.com/private-prison-firms-set-to-cash-in-on-immigrant-surveillance-boom](http://www.levernews.com/private-prison-firms-set-to-cash-in-on-immigrant-surveillance-boom).

<sup>8</sup> See Jesse Franzblau, *Cut the Contracts: It's Time to End ICE's Corrupt Detention Management System*, National Immigrant Justice Center (March 16, 2021),

class-action wage theft suit *Chen v. Geo Grp. Inc.* provides an illustrative case. On behalf of a class of thousands of people held in ICE detention, Mr. Chen claimed GEO Group violated the State of Washington’s Minimum Wage Act by paying him only \$1 per day for the work he performed.<sup>9</sup> According to GEO Group, the company spent roughly \$27 per hour to care, feed, clothe, bathe, and shelter people detained at the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington, or \$7.6 million during Fiscal Year 2016.<sup>10</sup> ICE paid GEO Group nearly \$57 million to provide those services, according to the contract GEO filed earlier in the case.<sup>11</sup> In other words, GEO Group admitted to pocketing nearly \$50 million — 83 cents of every dollar ICE paid — in profit.<sup>12</sup>

Using these profits, private prison companies like GEO Group spend millions to influence government spending and immigration enforcement policies. This lobbying often focuses on Congressional funding bills that set the level of funding for immigration detention. This dynamic leads to a gross private incentivization to detain more immigrants, where the profit motive is proven to result in cutting corners that put lives at risk.<sup>13</sup>

The Attorney General of the United States is responsible for setting policies that influence the number of people who are locked up in private immigration detention facilities. This presents a potential conflict of interest given Pam Bondi’s previous relationship working for the largest private prison company that profits based on the number of people held in immigration detention.

**Ms. Bondi’s confirmation could also enable private companies such as GEO Group to profit off immigration prosecutions, which are instrumental for family separations, and family detention.**

The Attorney General is responsible for overseeing the immigration courts and establishes policies that impact immigrant communities, including prosecutions for immigration-related offenses. The first Attorney General under the first Trump administration, Jeff Sessions, played a

---

[immigrantjustice.org/research-items/policy-brief-cut-contracts-its-time-end-ices-corrupt-detention-management-system](https://immigrantjustice.org/research-items/policy-brief-cut-contracts-its-time-end-ices-corrupt-detention-management-system)

<sup>9</sup> See *Chao Chen v. GEO Grp., Inc.*, 287 F. Supp. 3d 1158 (W.D. Wash. 2017).

<sup>10</sup> *Chao Chen v. GEO Grp., Inc.*, 3:17-cv-05769-RJB, Dkt. 45-6 at 3 (GEO’s Initial Disclosures), Dkt. 44 at 10, fn2 (Motion to Certify Class)

<sup>11</sup> *Chao Chen v. GEO Grp., Inc.*, 3:17-cv-05769-RJB, Dkt.19 at 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> On January 16, 2025, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a District Court decision that the Washington state minimum wage applies to work performed by people in detention participating in GEO’s “voluntary work program,” and upheld the \$23 million judgement against GEO Group. See *Nwauzor v. GEO Group, Inc.* (2025).

<sup>13</sup> See Timothy Williams, *Inside a Private Prison: Blood, Suicide and Poorly Paid Guards*, New York Times (Apr. 3, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/03/us/mississippi-private-prison-abuse.html>.

central role in executing an extreme anti-immigrant agenda that included increasing the government's reliance on immigration prosecutions. The June 2018 "zero-tolerance" policy led to the systematic separation of families so that parents could be sent to U.S. Marshals custody and prosecuted for unlawful entry and reentry. At the same time, the administration announced plans to add 15,000 ICE beds for family detention. Following this announcement, GEO Group's stock prices increased by 1.79%.<sup>14</sup>

If Pam Bondi is confirmed, there is concern that she will follow the footsteps of Jeff Sessions and increase the use of immigration prosecutions. This would cause a large increase in GEO Group contracts for federal detention. The GEO Group has faced criticism for safety violations, providing inadequate health care, and poor management practices, and should not have ties with any cabinet level member.

**Conclusion:** NIJC respectfully submits this statement for the record to underscore the detrimental effects of the private prison industry and serious concerns regarding the nomination of Pam Bondi. The fact that Ms. Bondi failed to disclose potential conflicts of influence associated with her past role lobbying for the private prison industry should be grounds to oppose her nomination.

**Contact:**

Jesse Franzblau, NIJC Senior Policy Analyst, [jfranzblau@immigrantjustice.org](mailto:jfranzblau@immigrantjustice.org)

---

<sup>14</sup> See American Friends Service Committee, *The GEO Group Inc, Immigration Jails* (June 2022), <https://investigate.afsc.org/company/geo-group>.