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Sheena C. Collum
Mayor



August 21, 2026

The Honorable Mikie Sherrill
Governor of the State of New Jersey
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 001
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0001

Re: Urgent Request for Disbursement of DDDI Funding to Service Providers

Dear Governor Sherrill:

I write as Mayor of South Orange Village with tremendous gratitude to you and the Legislature for New Jersey's \$20.2 million commitment to the Detention and Deportation Defense Initiative (DDDI) and the creation of the Rapid Legal Response Initiative. At a moment of dramatically increased immigration enforcement, these investments demonstrate New Jersey's commitment to due process and meaningful access to legal representation.

I recently learned, however, that **the funding authorized for DDDI has not yet been disbursed to the service providers responsible for putting these resources to work. I respectfully urge your Administration to expedite the necessary approvals and release of these funds.** Providers need to hire and train attorneys and paralegals, expand intake capacity, and build the legal infrastructure necessary to respond to emergency habeas and other federal litigation. **They simply do not have a minute to lose.**

We have experienced firsthand why this matters. Recent ICE activity in South Orange and surrounding communities resulted in individuals being taken into custody and families suddenly trying to locate loved ones and understand what could be done. A local DDDI attorney and her colleague, working through Legal Services of New Jersey, became a critical front line of defense, filing habeas corpus petitions in federal court. Individuals were subsequently released from detention and reunited with their families.

Without that immediate legal response, individuals taken from our communities could have been transferred outside New Jersey before meaningful legal intervention could occur. People are being detained, families are seeking help, and attorneys are successfully using our federal courts to challenge the lawfulness of detention and protect the due process rights of those in custody.



I am fortunate to lead a community that mobilizes immediately leveraging connections, raising private funds when needed, and advocating for anyone taken into custody within our borders. But meaningful access to due process should not depend on where someone is detained or the resources of the community that happens to surround them.

I am deeply grateful to you and the Legislature for making this investment. I respectfully urge your Administration to move the remaining administrative approvals forward as expeditiously as possible so these funds can reach DDDI providers and the legal capacity envisioned by DDDI and Rapid Legal Response can meet the urgent need New Jersey is experiencing today.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sheena Collum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sheena" and the last name "Collum" clearly distinguishable.

Sheena Collum
Mayor

cc: The Honorable Analilia Mejia, U.S. Rep., 10th Congressional District
The Honorable Renée Burgess, NJ State Senator, 28th District
The Honorable Cleopatra Tucker, NJ Assemblywoman, 28th District
The Honorable Chigozie Onyema, NJ Assemblyman, 28th District
Members of the South Orange Village Council