August 27, 2026

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United State Senate
411 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
United States House of Representatives
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
United States House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Pramila Jayapal
United States House of Representatives
2364 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kim Schrier
United State House of Representatives
1110 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Murray, Senator Cantwell, Representative Smith, Representative Larsen, Representative Jayapal, and Representative Schrier,

Thank you for your continuing partnership to ensure that airports are efficient gateways that are welcoming for travelers from across the globe. On behalf of the Port of Seattle and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, we are writing to share our concerns regarding immigration enforcement activity involving travelers at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA), including reports of federal immigration authorities detaining individuals arriving at SEA who have no known criminal history, as reported in recent *New York Times* and *Seattle Times* articles[1] [2].

While airline passengers have long been subject to screening by the Transportation Security Administration and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the federal government has generally refrained from immigration enforcement activities at airports, given the significant potential effect to airport security, create public safety issues, contribute to longer passenger wait times, and generally erode traveler confidence in flying. Airports are uniquely sensitive places and should not be a place where passengers fear their travel will expose them to an unpredictable enforcement process.

As a special-purpose local government and the operator of SEA, the Port does not have oversight or authority over the federal agencies responsible for immigration enforcement, a distinction that is not always apparent to the public when federal enforcement activity occurs at SEA. Because Congress has oversight responsibilities for these agencies, we are asking our congressional delegation to work with them to establish a clear process for notifying and coordinating with the Port regarding immigration enforcement activity at SEA.

We ask that federal immigration enforcement agencies:

- Be required to notify the Port in advance of planned enforcement activity, when operationally and legally feasible, including the anticipated timing and general operational impacts;
- When advance notification is not possible, provide the Port prompt notification afterward and an opportunity for appropriate debriefing;

[1] https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/16/us/trump-immigration-crackdown.html
[2] https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/ice-targets-certain-immigrants-at-sea-tac-airport-amid-national-push/

- Establish clear protocols to minimize unnecessary impacts on passenger flow, airport security, and airport operations.

As the operator of SEA, the Port of Seattle has a fundamental responsibility to maintain an airport that is safe, secure, efficient, welcoming, and accessible to everyone who uses it. That responsibility extends to our passengers, airport workers, airline partners, concessionaires, visitors, and the many Washington residents and visitors who rely upon SEA as a gateway to our state, our nation, and the world. For the Port, these are not only deeply held values, but also an economic imperative – given how much our facilities rely on both a workforce that includes immigrants as well as international cargo and international passengers.

The Port of Seattle respects the rule of law and recognizes the federal government's authority and responsibility to enforce immigration law. At the same time, we believe every person traveling through SEA is entitled to the full protection of the U.S. Constitution and applicable federal, state, and local laws, including due process, equal protection, access to legal counsel where applicable, and freedom from unlawful search, seizure, detention, or discrimination.

The Port values the work of our federal partners to keep our facilities safe and maintain homeland security. However, we believe strongly that these goals can be achieved while SEA can remain welcoming, accessible to all, and supportive of those immigrants, refugees, and foreign visitors who use our facilities every day.

Our goal is to ensure that every person who travels through SEA and, ultimately, any airport in our country has confidence that airports are a place where safety, security, lawful enforcement, and fundamental rights are treated as complementary responsibilities, not competing ones.

We stand ready to continue to serve as a partner in this effort. We are ready to meet wherever and whenever our federal and state partners believe it would be most productive. Whether that means inviting all relevant stakeholders here at SEA, traveling to Washington D.C., or bringing together federal, state, local, and community partners for a broader working session, the Port of Seattle is prepared to stand up and help host the conversation.

In the meantime, the Port will continue to serve as a convener. We will continue to engage the Governor's Office, the Washington State Attorney General's Office, alongside immigration rights organizations, legal service providers, airport stakeholders, to identify what we can collectively do to further support the traveling public in the immediate term.

Please let us know if you have any questions, or if there are ways that we can partner with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

Ryan Calkins
Commission President

Stephen P. Metruck
Executive Director

Fred Felleman
Commissioner

Sam Cho
Commissioner

Toshiko Hasegawa
Commissioner

Hamdi Mohamed
Commissioner