

NO SKOOK DETENTION

<http://www.noskookdetention.com>

February 3, 2026

We are writing on behalf of No Skook Detention, a rapidly-growing group of Schuylkill County residents opposed to the 7,500-bed ICE detention facility planned for Tremont, Pennsylvania. We learned of this decision with virtually no advance notice, no public input, and no answers from officials about the impacts we will face. We only found out last week via a Bloomberg News article that this site is intended to hold 7,500 people.

Our elected officials at every level claim to know nothing about this decision or say it's not their responsibility. It is unacceptable that the Department of Homeland Security did not notify or consult elected officials regarding their plans for this facility. Someone authorized this facility, someone conducted site selection, and someone approved funding. Your constituents deserve answers about how a decision of this magnitude was made without any local consultation or transparency.

Our community has many concerns as to how this will adversely affect our community. In this letter, we are listing just some of our many legitimate concerns.

Tremont, Pine Grove School District, and Schuylkill County will lose approximately \$1 million or more annually in tax revenue now that the federal government owns the former Big Lots Distribution Center. In addition to the tax implications, our county will be radically affected by this facility: our reputation, our safety, our infrastructure, and our economic opportunities are all at risk.

GEO Group is likely to operate this facility, as they already run the Moshannon Valley Processing Center in Clearfield County. That facility has faced a death in custody, ACLU lawsuits for violating the state Sunshine Act, and a federal civil rights complaint filed in 2024 documenting physical and psychological abuse and inadequate healthcare. Is this the reputation we want for Schuylkill County and Pennsylvania?

Our county has worked to attract businesses and investment to our region. Now we will be known as the detention capital of the Northeast, with 9,000 total detention beds between Tremont and nearby Upper Bern Township in Berks County. This facility will drastically reshape our community's identity and greatly reduce our chances of building a diversified, sustainable economy. It will deter business, investment, and tourism, and discourage potential residents from relocating here.

The jobs at this facility will be temporary, contract work for non-local corporations like GEO Group and Aspen Medical. They won't create stable careers. This won't grow our tax base. Instead, they'll increase shareholder profits far away from our community. This is a familiar tune to us in Schuylkill County: outside interests benefit from our work and our resources, extract profits, and leave. This is a bad deal for Schuylkill County and a bad deal for Pennsylvania.

Tremont has already been fighting Natural Soil Products, a biosolids processing company whose operations have caused terrible odors and depressed property values. Residents have fought for years against the company to protect their home values and their ability to breathe fresh air. Now the federal government is imposing a massive detention facility that will further devastate property values. Schuylkill County residents don't deserve this. Schuylkill County isn't a dumping ground.

Tremont's emergency services aren't equipped to handle the impacts of this facility. This mega center will inevitably attract protesters and media attention. Tremont doesn't have a local police force and relies on state police. How will the state police handle this additional burden? How will this affect the safety of Schuylkill County residents? Emergency services are already stretched thin, and we're facing a vastly-increased burden with a significantly reduced budget. Water pressure in the area is already inadequate, and firefighting will be harder if not impossible. Emergency response times will suffer, and residents' safety will be compromised.

The Dilley detention facility in Texas is currently experiencing a measles outbreak. Contagious diseases sweep through institutional settings like wildfire. How quickly would a similar outbreak spread through the much-larger Tremont facility? How quickly would it spread to the children at the daycare center that sits adjacent to the facility? What protocols exist to prevent outbreaks from spreading into our community? Our already under-resourced medical facilities cannot handle a public health emergency of this scale.

We have no answers about the facility's long-term future. When this temporary detention operation ends, will we be left with a massive vacant building and an absentee landlord that doesn't pay property taxes? Who maintains the property? Who is responsible for the cost and maintenance of the expanded infrastructure we'll likely need to build?

Why has our region been singled out for this unprecedented concentration of detention infrastructure? Why were local officials never consulted? What is the timeline for construction, and what disruptions will it cause?

We respectfully request the following:

1. An immediate briefing on how this decision was made and who was involved, and an explanation for why our region has been selected for this unprecedented concentration of detention facilities
2. A formal public comment period before any operations begin
3. A detailed impact assessment addressing infrastructure, public safety, public health, economic development, and fiscal concerns
4. A binding commitment that federal funds will cover all infrastructure upgrades and ongoing costs
5. A comprehensive public health and safety plan, including epidemic response protocols and crowd management resources
6. Guarantees regarding the facility's long-term disposition and community protection if operations cease
7. Your intervention to either halt this project until proper process is followed or ensure our community is fully protected from negative impacts

We expect our elected officials to stand up for us when the federal government makes decisions that will fundamentally alter our county without consent, preparation, or support.

We request a meeting with you or your senior staff within the next two weeks to discuss this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

No Skook Detention