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APALA Urges DHS and State Governments to Follow DOJ's Lead to End Private Prisons

Washington, DC – Yesterday, the Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a memo indicating the department would end the use of private prisons on the federal level. The Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA) recognizes that the DOJ's decision is a step in the right direction. However, we continue to urge the discontinuation of private prison use at the federal level in regards to immigration detention centers in addition to operation of private prisons at the state and county levels.

APALA National President Johanna Hester commented: "Yes, the DOJ decision is in fact a historic decision that shows some progress in criminal justice reform, and the 40,000 lives affected in those 13 prisons will hopefully improve for the better. Still, the private prison industry has larger customers than the Justice Department."

Today's announcement will not affect state and county prisons nor does it affect immigrant detention centers throughout the U.S. In 2015, private corporations operated 62% of immigration detention beds of the 250 detention centers throughout the U.S., compared to the 11% that the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) operated.

Hester added: "The increasingly disproportionate corporate operation of detention center beds speaks to how much influence the private prison industry has over the mass criminalization of immigrant communities. The DHS and state and county governments absolutely need to follow the Justice Department's lead in ending private prisons."

"The private prison industry is exactly what we call it – an industry. It's a business model that profits from locking up human beings for years on end in appalling living conditions. The private prison industry doesn't care for the human dignity nor the genuine rehabilitation of its inmates – it only cares about filling beds to maximize profits," stated APALA Executive Director Gregory A. Cendana. "While we welcome the DOJ's decision, we know there is more work that has and must be done."

In the 1990s, the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) prison population boomed by 250%. Even today, many formerly incarcerated AAPIs face deportation orders and detention centers when finishing their sentences. APALA remains dedicated to disrupting this school-to-prison-to-deportation pipeline and urges governments to divest from corporations which continue to profit from the mass incarceration of communities of color and immigrant communities. Read the AAPIs Behind Bars report that APALA co-authored here: bit.ly/AAPISBehindBars

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The **Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance** (APALA), AFL-CIO was founded in 1992 as the first and only national organization for Asian Pacific American union members to advance worker, immigrant and civil rights. For more information, visit www.apalanet.org and follow [@APALAnational](https://twitter.com/APALAnational)



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