

July 9, 2026

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Thune, Leader Schumer, and Members of the United States Senate:

We, the undersigned criminal justice, civil rights, immigrant rights, human rights, and community organizations, write in strong opposition to S.1404, the Combatting Organized Retail Crime Act (CORCA). We all support effective policy solutions to improve public safety, but CORCA is the wrong response. This legislation would dramatically expand the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) role in domestic law enforcement, authorizing sweeping new authority to collect, analyze, and share Americans' personal data without meaningful civil liberties safeguards, adequate oversight, or accountability mechanisms should DHS abuse this power.

Congress should not expand the footprint of DHS, which has already demonstrated it cannot be trusted with expanded surveillance authority. Over the past year alone, the agency has obtained sensitive personal data from Medicaid, the Internal Revenue Service, the Social Security Administration, private data brokers, police departments, tech companies, and more. It has spent millions on intrusive surveillance tools tracking the movements and locations of private citizens, capturing that information in massive databases and secret watchlists used to surveil protesters and legal observers. DHS has operated far beyond its original mandate, and CORCA would only reward this pattern of overreach with even greater power.

The bill's data-sharing framework is dangerously overbroad. The legislation creates a new DHS-run data-sharing system that lacks sufficient civil liberty protections. It authorizes broad information sharing across federal, state, local, and private-sector entities, including the disclosure of confidential information (that would otherwise be protected under federal law) if deemed "operationally necessary." This term is never defined, nor does the bill include *any* standards governing how personally identifiable information may be collected, used, stored, or deleted. Further, CORCA provides no mechanism for people to know whether DHS collected their data, let alone access or challenge those records, and it does not require DHS to demonstrate that data will be used for specific investigative purposes. The default is broad collection and dissemination across federal, state, local, and private-sector entities.

CORCA would quietly construct a massive public-private surveillance network. The bill encourages extensive information sharing between DHS and private corporations, including retailers and transportation companies. This provision risks enabling a vast public-private surveillance network in which personal data would flow into federal law enforcement systems

via veiled corporate agreements without constitutional safeguards. Such arrangements raise serious concerns about government misuse of commercially collected data for surveillance purposes, leading to racial profiling and targeting noncitizens in retail environments.

The bill deepens DHS's influence over state and local policing through grants and open-ended cooperation agreements. CORCA allows DHS to partner with local law enforcement agencies, even those not currently receiving federal funding, and to recommend changes that expand existing grants beyond their original requirements. This effectively gives DHS leverage to push jurisdictions—especially those reliant on federal funding—toward adopting more intrusive data collection and surveillance practices they may otherwise reject. These provisions also threaten the ability of localities to tailor their own responses to retail theft, which is not a one-size-fits-all issue and is often driven by economic need rather than organized criminal activity.

CORCA entrenches DHS and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the center of domestic law enforcement. The bill positions Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) as the hub of a new national intelligence apparatus focused on organized retail crime, **whose leader will be appointed by the director of ICE**. This further collapses the distinction between domestic policing and immigration enforcement. Although once independent, HSI is now forced to work with ICE on removal operations, and HSI agents say their connection to ICE has undermined their ability to do investigative work. HSI is intended to investigate transnational crime, and while it has made recent forays into domestic retail theft, Congress should be incredibly wary of permanently authorizing this expansion.

The bill's sunset provision is illusory. Although the crime coordination center would sunset after seven years, CORCA includes no requirement to dismantle data-sharing systems, delete collected information, or reverse any entrenched surveillance practices. History shows that once such infrastructure is built, it is rarely undone, resulting in the gradual erosion of constitutional privacy rights.

Congress should not respond to concerns about retail theft by handing more power to an agency that has skirted accountability and has a documented record of surveillance overreach. Effective solutions must be carefully targeted, address the root causes of theft, support impacted workers and businesses, and uphold everyone's constitutional rights. CORCA does none of this.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote no on CORCA and any other legislation that would expand DHS's footprint.

For questions, please contact Aiden Cotter, director of federal advocacy at the Vera Institute of Justice, at acotter@vera.org.

Sincerely,

A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing)

Alianza Americas

American Civil Liberties Union

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

American Gateways

Amnesty International USA

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Ayuda

The Advocates for Human Rights

The Bail Project

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action Riverdale

Berks Organizing Workgroup

Black Alliance for Just Immigration

Borderlands Resource Initiative

CASES

Center for Community Alternatives

Center for Criminal Justice Reform, University of Baltimore School of Law

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Church World Service

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

Clean Elections Texas

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)

Coalition on Human Needs

Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition (CIRC)

COFEM- Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas

Common Cause

CommonDefense.us

Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)

Concern Citizens Table of Lake Charles

Democracy Power Project

Detention Watch Network

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund

Dream.org

Drug Policy Alliance

Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC)

Faithful Voter Project

Federal Public and Community Defenders

Fight for the Future
Florida Immigrant Coalition
For a Better Bayou
Freedom Network USA
Free Speech For People
FWD.us
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR)
Grassroots Leadership
Haitian Bridge Alliance
Healing Communities PA
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Illinois Coalition to End Permanent Punishments
Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef)
Immigrant Defense Project
Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC)
Immigration Services and Legal Advocacy (ISLA)
Indivisible
Indivisible Chicago Alliance
Innovation Law Lab
International Mayan League
Jesuit Social Research Institute, Loyola New Orleans
Joint Immigration Justice Committee of Indivisible Harlem and Indivisible Inwood
Just Detention International
Just Futures Law
JustLeadershipUSA
Latin America Working Group
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Liberty and Dignity Coalition
Lift Louisiana
Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention
Louisiana Center for Childrens Rights
Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants (LORI)
Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition
Make the Road Pennsylvania
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Miami Valley Immigration Coalition
Michigan Chapter of Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants
Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration (MI-CEMI)
Michigan Roundtable for Just Communities
MomsRising

More Than Our Crimes
MoveOn
Muslim Advocates
NAACP
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Association of Social Workers
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
National Partnership for New Americans
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
National Women's Law Center Action Fund
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nevada Immigrant Coalition
New York Civil Liberties Union
OneAmerica
Oregon For All
People Power United
Pennsylvania Immigration Coalition
Pipes
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Project On Government Oversight
Project South
Prosecutors Alliance Action
Public Citizen
Pure Justice
Refugee Advocacy Lab
Refugees International
Restore The Fourth Action
Robert & Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center
Safe and Just Michigan
Santa Cruz County Office of the Public Defender
Serious About Safety Majority
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)
Showing Up for Racial Justice
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Justice Team
Social Justice Collaborative
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC)
Texas Jail Project
The Bronx Defenders
The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
The New York Immigration Coalition
The Thurman Perry Foundation
The Workers Circle
The Wren Collective
United Church of Christ
United for Respect
United We Dream Network
UnLocal
Unlock the Box Campaign
Vera Institute of Justice
Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network
We are CASA
We of Action Virginia
Westside Sponsoring Committee
Witness at the Border
WOFA