

JOINT PRESS RELEASE: Bay Area Family Sues U.S. Government and Private Prison Contractors for Violent ICE Arrest and Abuses in Immigration Detention, Demands Reparations

July 6, 2026

Media Contacts: Elena Hodges, Pangea Legal Services | 415-757-9917, elena@pangealegal.org
Laura Murchie, Disability Law United | 404-912-5234, lmurchie@dlunited.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Jose, California —A Bay Area father who was subjected to a violent ICE arrest that triggered a medical emergency followed by months of abuses and disability violations in immigration detention, filed suit this morning with his wife and child, seeking damages for physical and emotional harm that ICE and private detention contractors inflicted on their family.

The plaintiffs, Ulises Peña Lopez, his wife Aby Peña, and their 5-year-old daughter, are represented by Pangea Legal Services and Disability Law United. ICE officials violently assaulted Ulises and ignored his needs as a disabled individual during an enforcement action on February 21, 2025. ICE agents took Ulises to a secluded alleyway where they beat him until he lost consciousness and required CPR. Emergency medical services responded and rushed Ulises to the hospital, where he received emergency care, but was prevented from fully describing his symptoms and injuries because ICE interfered with medical treatment and attorney access. Instead of releasing Ulises to receive appropriate follow-up care and reunite him with his family, ICE detained him.

Over the next six-plus months in immigration detention—first at Golden State Annex, followed by California City Detention Center—Ulises developed additional disabilities as a result of the beating. He was subjected to pervasive mistreatment and abuses by ICE and the private prison operators GEO Group and CoreCivic, who ridiculed him for his speech and hearing disabilities and denied him the use of his cane and other needed mobility accommodations. In addition to seeking damages to compensate for the lifelong harm caused by the violent ICE arrest itself, the suit seeks to hold the federal government, GEO Group, and CoreCivic accountable for the medical neglect and disability rights violations Ulises suffered in ICE detention, as well as the emotional harms caused to Ulises’s wife Aby and daughter, who both witnessed part of the violent ICE arrest.

“This lawsuit seeks accountability for the physical and emotional harms our clients suffered, but it also joins a growing wave of lawsuits challenging abusive ICE enforcement and detention practices,” said **Elena Hodges**, immigration attorney and co-director at Pangea Legal Services. “We hope this case will send a powerful message to immigrant communities that they are not alone, and that ICE officials and private prison contractors are not above the law.”

The family filed this federal lawsuit under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA), a law that allows individuals to sue the U.S. government directly for injuries by federal agents, state and federal disability laws, and California’s Accountability in Detention Act.

“I want the agencies and corporations involved to answer for the rights violations my family suffered,” confirmed **Aby Peña**. “I also hope this case sheds light on what many immigrant families are going through and ensures that no one else has to endure such a painful experience. If this process can bring about changes that protect others and prevent these abuses from happening again, then it will have served a purpose far greater than our own case.”

“Despite clear laws and policies protecting people with disabilities, ICE and its private contractors systematically violate these rights. For Ulises, a healthy father who was successfully managing a disability before ICE’s violent arrest, these violations have left him severely and multiply disabled. There has to be recourse for these harms.,” affirmed **Laura Murchie**, Staff Attorney at Disability Law United.

[Support the family’s fundraiser](#) to help support essential costs for medical care, childcare, and other basic needs.