



**Homeland
Security**

Engagement Readout

The CIS Ombudsman's Listening Session: Get to Know DHS's New Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman

On October 14, 2021, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) [Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman \(CIS Ombudsman\)](#) hosted a listening session about DHS's new Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman (OIDO).

During this session, CIS Ombudsman Phyllis Coven engaged in a conversation with OIDO's leadership, including its Acting Ombudsman David Gersten, to introduce the new office and provide an overview of its work. Acting Ombudsman Gersten provided an overview of OIDO's mission and goals, and discussed its four program areas, which include case management, detention oversight, policy and standards, and external relations. OIDO shared information about the types of complaints the office will handle and its plans to begin accepting complaints through three pilot programs, one currently operating in Atlanta, GA and two slated to launch in El Paso and San Antonio, TX by the end of 2021. The team also discussed how it will conduct oversight of detention facilities and report on its findings.

A total of 184 stakeholders joined this listening session. Below is a sample of the questions received:

- Will community-based organizations or advocacy groups (that are not serving as legal representatives) have a mechanism to alert OIDO about concerns related to specific detainees or detention facilities?
- How will OIDO create awareness about its services with detainees?
- How will OIDO prioritize which detention facilities to visit?
- How can a detainee file a complaint regarding conditions in a detention facility?
- How will OIDO protect detainees from retaliation by detention facility personnel?
- Will OIDO be involved in release and parole decisions?
- Is it within OIDO's mandate to actively identify veterans in detention?
- What is the role of the CIS Ombudsman in relation to the new Immigration Detention Ombudsman?

Speakers

Phyllis Coven, Ombudsman, Office of the CIS Ombudsman, DHS

Nathan Stiefel, Deputy Ombudsman, Office of the CIS Ombudsman, DHS

Bertha Anderson, Chief of Public Engagement, Office of the CIS Ombudsman, DHS

David Gersten, Acting Ombudsman, Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman, DHS

Carla Fall, Director of Case Management, Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman, DHS