



MATT TUERK
MAYOR

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July 10, 2025

Honorable J. Brian Johnson
President Judge, Court of Common Pleas
Lehigh County Courthouse
Thirty-First Judicial District
455 West Hamilton Street
Allentown, PA 18101

Dear President Judge Johnson,

As Mayor of Allentown and an elected representative of the residents of the City of Allentown, I am writing to express my concerns about policies at the Lehigh County Courthouse that permit agents of the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to advance a climate of fear in our city.

Among my worries is that people in Lehigh County are afraid to attend court because of reports that ICE is free to detain people after hearings in the courthouse—substantiated by several incidents in recent weeks. This, coupled with ICE's demonstrated willingness to detain people who are lawfully present in the United States, has the unfortunate effect of preventing Allentown residents from seeking protection or redress through the court. Access to justice is a cornerstone of our democracy. When people are too afraid to enter the courthouse, they are effectively denied that right.

Permitting ICE to conduct operations in our courthouse undermines public trust and inhibits full civic participation. *I urge you to prevent ICE from operating with impunity in our courthouse.*

Fear and suffering stem from a lack of clarity. Uncertainty about the policies of the Lehigh County Courthouse breeds fear in the minds of the residents of Allentown, and prevents them from engaging with the judiciary. Once you take action to prohibit ICE from operating in the courthouse, you will have taken a major step toward restoring trust in government and faith in its fairness. I am your ally in making that message known to our community: that the courthouse is a place where people can seek justice, free from persecution.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you prohibit the use of Lehigh County Courthouse facilities by ICE in their efforts to circumvent the judicial process and spread a culture of fear. Additionally, I request that you issue a public and unambiguous policy regarding ICE's presence in the courthouse. My goal is not to be confrontational, but to join you in a commitment to justice for all residents of the City of Allentown.

I deeply respect your authority in Lehigh County and I welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. At the same time, I urgently request that you take prompt action. Together, we can build trust in our community.

Sincerely,

Matt Tuerk
Mayor