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# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Attorney General Brown Urges Federal Court to Keep U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Civil Rights Offices Open**

*Coalition of Attorneys General Opposes DHS's Closure of Three Offices Created to Address Civil Rights Violations within DHS and Provide Direct Case Assistance to Noncitizens*

**BALTIMORE, MD (May 20, 2025)** – Attorney General Anthony G. Brown joined a coalition of 20 other attorneys general in urging the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to maintain three offices within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that are meant to oversee the agency, protect people's civil rights, and help noncitizens with immigration matters. In March, DHS announced plans to shut down three offices within the agency, the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman (CIS Ombudsman), and the Office of Immigration Detention Ombudsman (OIDO), that were created by Congress to exercise oversight of various DHS programs. The offices' sudden closure affects pending complaints and investigations and did not provide individuals or employers any alternative avenue for redress. Attorney General Brown and the coalition argue in an amicus [brief](#) that DHS's unilateral closure of congressionally mandated offices exceeds their statutory and constitutional authority and will harm the states' residents and employers who interact with DHS.

"The closure of these vital oversight offices threatens the civil rights and wellbeing of thousands of Marylanders who rely on them for protection and assistance," **said Attorney General Brown.** "Our Office remains committed to ensuring federal agencies are accountable to the people they serve and uphold the values of justice and human dignity that our communities deserve."

In March, despite congressional objection, DHS announced that it would unilaterally abolish three offices, CRCL, the CIS Ombudsman, and OIDO, through reductions-in-force. Attorney General Brown and the coalition write in their brief that shutting down these offices will impact residents in Maryland and other states who rely on these offices for various services. For example, prior to its closure, the CIS Ombudsman provided direct assistance, ranging from employment authorization to naturalization, for noncitizens and employers in tens of thousands of immigration benefits cases each year, including hundreds brought by Marylanders.

The attorneys general assert that without the services provided by the CIS Ombudsman, thousands of individuals in Maryland and other states will likely face denials or extreme delays in obtaining vital immigration benefits such as work and student visas, work authorizations, and green cards. Moreover, the coalition argues that the closing of the CIS Ombudsman will be costly for many states that issue grants to fund legal assistance programs to help their residents apply for T- and U-visas, asylum, or temporary protected status.

In their brief, the attorneys general warn that without the ability to make complaints to OIDO or to rely on OIDO's site visit and unannounced facility inspections, detained individuals are likely to face unsanitary and dangerous conditions. Prior to its abrupt closure, OIDO's case managers conducted hundreds of monthly site visits and unannounced inspections at detention facilities across the country. At site visits, case managers provided direct, face-to-face assistance to detained individuals. The inspections allowed OIDO to identify and remedy systemic conditions such as critically low medical staffing levels, leaking roofs, and mold in living areas. The OIDO also responded to thousands of complaints from detainees annually, about issues related to living conditions and medical care.

Attorney General Brown and the coalition are urging the court to restore these offices to continue the services that employers and residents rely on and to continue oversight of various DHS programs.

Joining Attorney General Brown in filing this brief are the attorneys general of New York, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and the District of Columbia.

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