

May 11, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
House Minority Leader  
2267 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader Jeffries, and Members of Congress:

**We, the undersigned criminal justice, civil rights, immigrant rights, and community organizations, write in strong opposition to H.R. 2853, the Combatting Organized Retail Crime Act (CORCA).** While we recognize that organized retail theft is a legitimate concern that warrants effective policy solutions, 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. CORCA's lack of any notice, challenge mechanism, or civil rights guardrails raises Fourteenth Amendment concerns about equal protection and due process for everyone whose data enters this system. 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](mailto:acotter@vera.org).

Sincerely,

- American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
- Berks Liberation Center
- Borderlands Resource Initiative
- BOW Berks Organizing Workgroup
- Center for Criminal Justice Reform, University of Baltimore School of Law
- Coalition on Human Needs
- Cobalt
- Common Cause
- CommonDefense.us
- Defending Rights & Dissent
- Detention Watch Network
- Dream.org
- Federal Public and Community Defenders
- Fight for the Future
- FWD.us
- Government Information Watch
- GVI
- Healing Communities PA
- Hope Border Institute
- Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef)
- Immigrant Legal Resource Center
- Just Futures Law
- Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
- Muslim Advocates
- National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- National Hispanic Media Coalition
- National Immigration Law Center
- National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
- National Women's Law Center Action Fund
- New. Digital. Now.
- Ohio Correctional Accountability Project Inc
- OneAmerica
- People Power United
- Popular Democracy
- Project On Government Oversight
- Restore The Fourth
- Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)
- Vera Institute of Justice
- Wren Action Group

