

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20528

Todd M. Lyons
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Secretary Noem and Acting Director Lyons:

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the detention of Ms. Kseniia Petrova, a Russian citizen and researcher at Harvard Medical School. She was legally in the United States on a J-1 scholar visa but is being held in an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility after her visa was revoked. She is currently awaiting her preliminary hearing before an immigration judge on May 7, 2025.

Ms. Petrova was detained after a paperwork mistake on the US customs declaration form for a box of frog embryo samples she was asked by her boss to bring back to her lab at Harvard. As a result, her visa was revoked, and she was detained after unfounded claims that she is a ‘danger to the community’ and a ‘flight risk.’ She has done nothing to risk our country’s security and has not done anything wrong except try to facilitate a request by her employer to bring the embryos back. While she did make a mistake, the penalty for improperly importing this non-toxic, non-hazardous frog material is a fine of up to \$500, not detention or deportation.

We are concerned that deporting Ms. Petrova to Russia would endanger her life. She has good reason to fear political retaliation for bravely protesting Putin’s invasion of Ukraine and calling for his impeachment. Additionally, she is reportedly being held with at least 70 other detainees in the same cell. Without evidence to support claims she is a flight risk or danger to the community, we strongly urge you to give due consideration to her request for release on parole while her case is pending.

Ms. Petrova is a highly skilled researcher, and the US greatly benefits from the work she does. She is the kind of person we want to come to the US and help us in our scientific study where she has been recognized for diligence and dedication. Her continued detention is a great loss to the Harvard community and to our country. We urge you to give due consideration to her contention that she is neither a flight risk nor a danger to our community, and to the dangers she could face in being deported to Russia.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



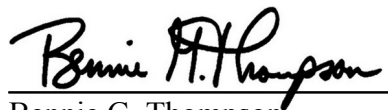
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



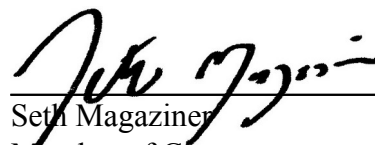
Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress