THE PEOPLE'S RECORD



A Report on the People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement

CHICAGO REGION ★ MAY 20, 2026



The Declaration of Immigration, Pilsen neighborhood, Chicago, IL. Mural by Salvador Jiménez-Flores



One of the many murals that line the viaducts on 16th Street in Pilsen. ©Tyler LaRiviere/Sun-Times

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report of the People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement in Chicago was made possible by the brave organizations and individuals willing to publicly document the profound impacts of Operation Midway Blitz and ongoing immigration enforcement actions in the Chicago region. Testimony provided at the hearing highlighted the terror faced by communities due to the egregious immigration enforcement measures taken by the federal administration, and how those actions continue to undermine the well-being of residents across the region, regardless of their immigration status.

Chicagoans united to share their experiences, supporting their neighbors, helping to keep families safe, and locating those who were detained or "disappeared" because of these operations. Their courage and determination to create a public record of these violations provide critical direct accounts of civil rights infringements, the detrimental effects on families and children, and the essential role played by grassroots organizations and community leaders. This hearing was made possible because of their resilience and commitment to justice, and their willingness to create this public record.

We extend our gratitude to local organizations that were instrumental in shaping the focus of the hearing, convening affected communities, and facilitating testimony. Their critical contributions have significantly enhanced public understanding of the dangers inherent in the large-scale immigration enforcement operations being carried out by the current administration. We recognize and commend the following organizations for their leadership and support:

- **Latinos Progresando**
- **Latino Policy Forum**
- **ACLU of Illinois**
- **Alivio Medical Center**
- **Arise Chicago**
- **Center for Immigrant Progress**
- **Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights**
- **Chinese American Service League**
- **El Valor**
- **Enlace Chicago**
- **Expanded Mental Health Services of Chicago**
- **Gads Hill Center**
- **Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois**
- **Humboldt Park Health**
- **Illinois Accountability Commission**
- **Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights**
- **Illinois Latino Agenda**
- **Kedzie Center**
- **Instituto del Progreso Latino**
- **La Casa Norte**
- **Little Village Chamber of Commerce**
- **Muslim Civic Coalition**
- **National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture**
- **Southside Together**
- **The Resurrection Project**
- **University of Illinois Chicago School of Law**
- **United African Organization**

Moderated by **Rochelle Garza, Chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**, with help from **former Commission Chair Marty Castro**, this People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement in Chicago was organized and sponsored by:

- **Hispanic Federation**
- **Miranda Family**
- **Latino Victory Foundation**
- **Texas Civil Rights Project**

We acknowledge the valuable information provided in the Chicago Sun-Times' one-year retrospective on Operation Midway Blitz and appreciate their allowing us to use several Sun-Times photographs in this report.

Most importantly, we acknowledge the courage of the countless individuals—some recognized in the media and others known only to family and friends—who have suffered due to these enforcement actions, losing their safety, their freedom, and, in some cases, their lives.



Protesters gather outside an ICE processing facility in the Chicago suburb of Broadview, Ill., Friday, Nov. 21, 2025. ©AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Immigrant communities are under siege in the United States. Thousands of immigrants have been detained, arrested, imprisoned, and deported since the Trump administration began its campaign in early 2025. Operation Midway Blitz, which began in the late summer of that year, targeted immigrants in Chicago and the surrounding Illinois region. Described by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as one of the largest operations of its kind, it brought thousands of federal agents — from ICE, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and other agencies — into neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, courthouses, health clinics, and homes across the Chicago area. DHS claimed nearly 4,500 arrests by the end of December, including at least 75 U.S. citizens.[1]

This report is an act of witness. It draws on testimony presented during the People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement on May 20, 2026, in Chicago, at which more than two dozen speakers across six panels — attorneys, advocates, elected and appointed officials, mental health providers, small business owners, and directly impacted individuals and families — documented, for the public record, how enforcement was experienced on the ground. It follows the model of the earlier report on Minnesota's Operation Metro Surge, **The People's Record: A Report on the People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement in Minnesota** (March 2026), as part of a broader effort to build a public record of enforcement operations throughout the country.

Across the testimony gathered during the People's Hearing in Chicago, several threads emerged. Enforcement expanded in scale and intensity with little regard for constitutional limits: agents frequently made stops and arrests without judicial warrants, based on little more than an individual's race, language, accent, or occupation as justification for their actions. People were detained despite valid documentation and pending legal cases, and families and attorneys often struggled for days or weeks to locate loved ones after they were moved through the Broadview ICE Processing Center and on to detention facilities in as many as 13 states.

Testimony described the fatal shooting of Silverio Villegas-González, a father of two young children, and the shooting of Marimar Martinez, a 30-year-old U.S. citizen who was shot five times by an ICE agent while trying to warn her neighbors about an enforcement action — along with widespread use of chemical substances (tear gas, pepper spray, and gas and pepper balls) by law enforcement, including near schools, a health clinic, and residential streets. These actions produced significant mental health harm to children and families regardless of immigration status, and severe, sustained economic disruption to immigrant-owned businesses and commercial corridors such as 26th Street in Little Village, with owners reporting revenue losses of 20% to 70% and some businesses closing for good.

The record reveals troubling and systemic violations of due process and constitutional rights that have harmed thousands of Chicago-area residents, and a continuing culture of federal agent impunity that has prevented meaningful operational oversight or accountability.

What happened in Chicago and the surrounding areas last year has since been repeated in other cities across the country. As a result, the testimony presented in this report is a component record of a national campaign of terror and intimidation against communities and individuals being carried out by the U.S. government.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Escalation of immigration enforcement actions caused widespread disruption and harm across the Chicago region.

2. Enforcement practices were carried out without meaningful accountability or federal oversight.

3. Due process protections enshrined in law and the Constitution were denied in practice, and continued despite court orders and other judicial actions.

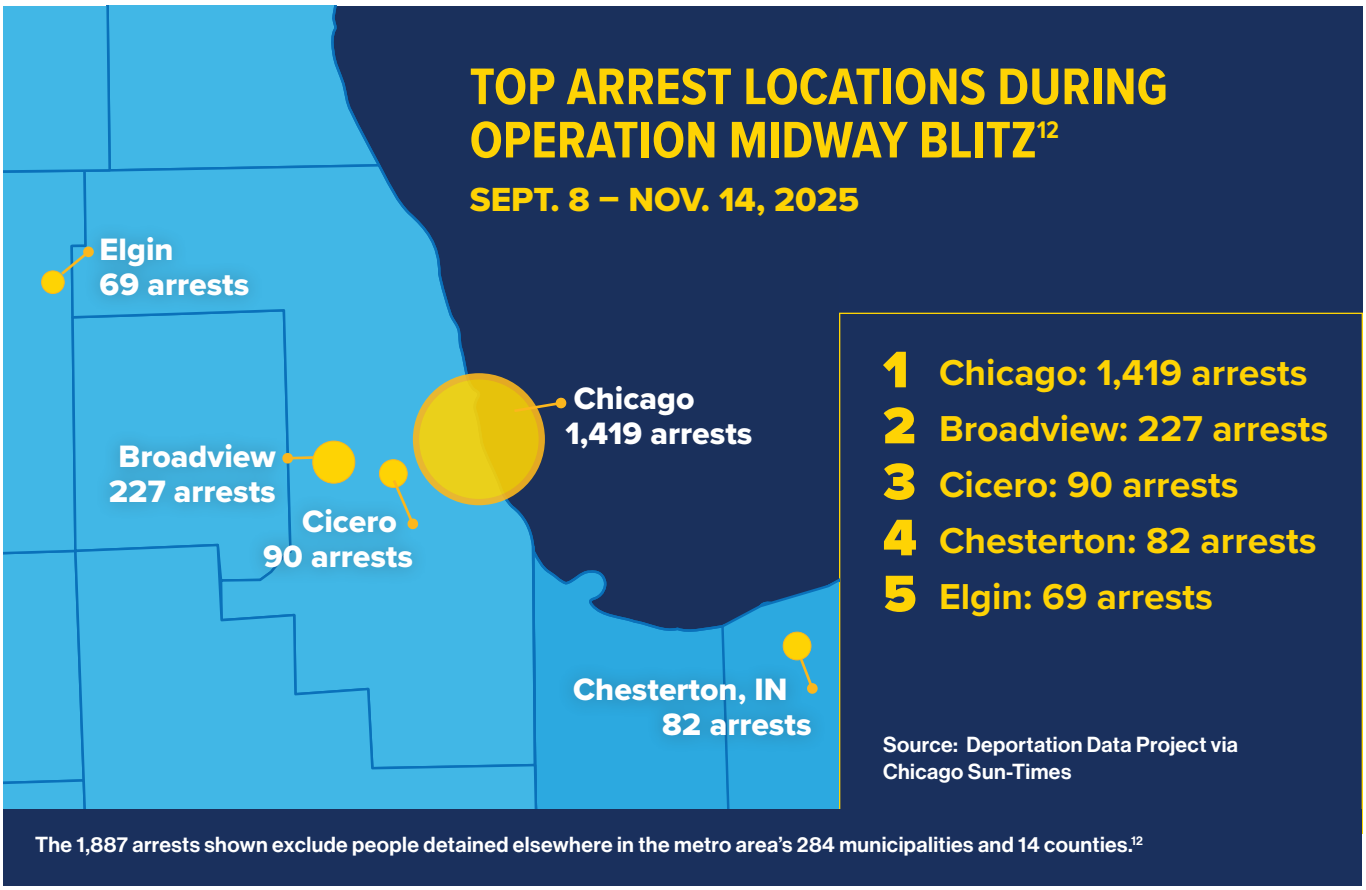
4. Individuals were effectively "disappeared" within the detention system following arrest.

5. Detention conditions and practices endangered lives and restricted individuals' ability to exercise their rights.

6. Federal agents used excessive force, including the shooting of a U.S. citizen bystander and the use of chemical substances against largely peaceful communities.

7. Enforcement practices caused lasting mental health harm to children, families, and communities.

8. Local economies and small businesses — particularly along historic immigrant commercial corridors — suffered severe and continuing harm.



The 1,887 arrests shown exclude people detained elsewhere in the metro area's 284 municipalities and 14 counties.[12]

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS AND FEDERAL AGENCIES FOR ENSURING DHS OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

1. Conduct a full and independent investigation into Operation Midway Blitz.

2. Establish independent oversight and public reporting requirements for immigration enforcement operations.

3. Protect the constitutional rights of both targeted individuals and observers during enforcement actions.

4. Strengthen and enforce due process protections and establish reliable tracking systems for detained individuals.

5. Reform detention practices and fully enforce minimum standards, at Broadview and out-of-state transfer facilities alike.

6. Limit the use of interstate transfers that separate detained individuals from counsel and family.

7. Support community recovery and address the broader impacts of enforcement on families, workers, and local economies.

These findings, conclusions, and recommendations hold urgent significance not only for the residents of Chicago and Illinois, but for other cities facing similar enforcement "surges." Without serious Congressional oversight and meaningful changes to DHS and ICE policies, practices, and accountability, the widespread harm documented here is being replicated in cities and states across the nation.



Chicagoans march on the street to protest the escalation of federal immigration enforcement actions in the city. ©Jen Golbeck / SOPA Images/Sipa USA/ via AP Images



Federal agents clash with Chicagoans in the East Side Neighborhood on October 14, 2025. ©Joshua Lott/The Washington Post via Getty Images

OPERATION MIDWAY BLITZ:
A Case Study in Immigration Enforcement Terror

The harmful impact of immigration enforcement on vulnerable communities is a thread woven into the fabric of American history. As former U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Chair Marty Castro told the hearing, this is at least the third time the federal government has rounded up members of a community — including U.S. citizens — and sent people to countries they were not born in, or removed people who were lawfully present when it did not have to. During World War I, laws such as the Espionage Act and Sedition Act were used to silence dissent and target immigrant communities. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, more than 120,000 Japanese Americans, most of them U.S. citizens, were forcibly removed and incarcerated without individual evidence of wrongdoing. In both cases, these actions — taken in the name of immigration enforcement and national security — came to be recognized as marks of profound shame in our nation's history. It is painfully clear that what is unfolding now will similarly stain America's immigration story and, as noted historian Dr. Yohuru Williams said in The People's Hearing in Minnesota, this history will echo through generations.

A consistent lesson across these moments is the role that communities play in documenting what is happening on the ground. Civil rights protections have often advanced not only through legal challenges, but through the work of individuals and communities who documented arrests, abuses, and patterns of enforcement. Public hearings are part of that tradition. Quoting the Roman playwright Terence — "nothing human is alien to me" — Castro told the hearing that this government has sought to dehumanize immigrant communities, and that documenting what happened is vital to Chicagoans' efforts to pursue accountability, reform, and justice.

> **"We saw that there was no good or bad immigrant in the eyes of the federal government."**
>
> **Nubia Willman, former Chief Programs Officer, Latinos Progresando**



ICE agents push back residents at 105th Street and South Avenue N on the Far Southeast Side during a contentious enforcement action on October 14, 2025, following a car chase through the residential area. ©Anthony Vazquez/Sun-Times

Operation Midway Blitz began in Chicago on September 8, 2025, and was described by DHS as one of the largest immigration enforcement operations of its kind. It expanded quickly beyond its initial footprint, involving masked and often unidentified agents, aggressive and violent tactics, warrantless arrests, and a sustained and highly visible presence of armed federal agents in residential neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, courthouses, and commercial corridors. The operation began just before Mexican Independence Day, one of the largest annual civic celebrations in the city, and several witnesses testified that the fear it created nearly canceled the 54-year-old Little Village Mexican Independence Day Parade.

> **"Everything that the government could have done to attack us, they did. Everything from racial profiling to abductions and kidnappings, breaking windows, using excessive force, subjecting our people to inhumane conditions, moving them around from one detention center to another, and failing to locate individuals or provide secure telephone lines for them to be able to communicate with their attorneys."**
>
> **– Eréndira Rendón, Vice President of Immigrant Justice, The Resurrection Project**

Testimony traced a series of flashpoints across the operation's roughly four-month span: the arrest of a flower vendor on September 7 and his deportation to Mexico about one week later, believed to be the first deportation under Operation Midway Blitz; the September 8 official start of the operation; the fatal shooting of Silverio Villegas-González, a Mexican national, during a traffic stop in the Franklin Park suburb of Chicago on September 12; the October 4 incident in which ICE agent Charles Exum shot US. citizen Marimar Martinez five times as she attempted to warn her neighbors that ICE agents were in the area; an October 15 incident in which federal agents smashed a car window at a gas station in Waukegan without presenting a warrant;



Protesters outside the Broadview ICE Detention Center on Friday, September 5, 2025. ©Ashlee Rezin/Sun-Times

a November 5 raid at a Little Village daycare in which agents chased and detained a staff member as toddlers were being dropped off; a November 8 incident in which agents deployed tear gas and displayed weapons at 26th Street and Pulaski, one of the city's busiest commercial intersections; the winding-down of the core operation around November 14; and a second surge of arrests from December 16 to 18, during which at least one witness's husband was detained and never returned to his family.

As with other critical junctures in American history, the repercussions of Operation Midway Blitz reach far beyond its purported goals of enforcement. This report captures the lived experiences of those affected by these actions, drawing upon testimony gathered during the People's Hearing to ensure these community voices are documented and recognized as a vital part of the public record.



"I think about what it means to raise children in a neighborhood where you have to teach them to be afraid of federal law enforcement, not because they're criminals, not because they've done anything wrong, but because of who they are, where their family comes from, and the color of their skin. That is a weight no family should have to carry, and America is failing us when this is happening."

Marcos Carbajal, Carnitas Uruapan



Protesters march westbound on 26th Street in Little Village, October 2025. ©Tyler Pasciak LaRivere/Sun-Times

TIMELINE: Operation Midway Blitz

- **SEPTEMBER 7 –** Flower Vendor Leodegario Martínez Barradas is arrested in Archer Heights and within a week becomes the first person deported under Operation Midway Blitz
- **SEPTEMBER 8 –** DHS announces launch of Operation Metro Blitz
- **SEPTEMBER 10 –** Gregory Bovino arrives to oversee the operation
- **SEPTEMBER 12 –** Silverio Villegas-González, a Mexican national, is fatally shot during a traffic stop in the Franklin Park suburb of Chicago
- **SEPTEMBER 16 –** ICE raid in Elgin, IL uses helicopters, armored vehicles, and smoke bombs
- **SEPTEMBER 26 –** Demonstration outside Broadview ICE facility leads to the arrest of the "Broadview Six," for felony conspiracy — all charges eventually dropped
- **OCTOBER 4 –** ICE agent Charles Exum shoots US citizen and Montessori teacher Marimar Martinez five times as she shouts "La Migra" to warn neighbors
- **OCTOBER 15 –** Federal agents smash a car window at a gas station in Waukegan without presenting a warrant
- **NOVEMBER 5 –** ICE agents raid a Little Village daycare center, chasing and detaining a staff member as toddlers watch
- **NOVEMBER 8 –** Agents deploy flash-bang grenades, Mace, and pepper spray directly into crowds of onlookers and protesters without warning and show weapons at 26th Street and Pulaski in Little Village, one of Chicago's busiest commercial intersections
- **NOVEMBER 14 –** Operation winds down
- **DECEMBER 16-18 –** ICE returns for a second surge of arrests
- **MAY 21, 2026 –** Last charges against the Broadview Six are dropped by US Attorney after grand jury misconduct by prosecutors is revealed
- **SEPTEMBER 17, 2026 –** 15 US citizens and legal residents announce filing of a claim against the federal government under the Federal Tort Claims Act, alleging excessive force, wrongful detainment, and other violations of their constitutional rights by federal immigration agents
- **SEPTEMBER 24, 2026 –** Lead prosecutor in Broadview Six case retires "under protest," claiming Chicago's US Attorney "personally directed" the prosecution[13]

CONTEXT

Immigration Enforcement Under the Current Administration and Operation Midway Blitz

The current administration is attempting the largest deportation effort in recent U.S. history, through arrests, detention, the elimination of most asylum opportunities, the curtailment and violation of due process and, as the testimony in this report makes clear, threats and repeated violence against immigrants and their supporters. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reports that over one million people were arrested and 985,000 people deported through July 12, 2026. DHS also estimates that 1.9 to 2.2 million people "self-deported," leaving the U.S. voluntarily, though these numbers are difficult to verify. The Brookings Institution estimates that about 205,000 children, including 145,000 who are U.S. citizens, have had a parent detained during this administration, and more than 22,000 have had all their co-resident parents detained.[23]

Nationally, arrests of people with no criminal record grew by an estimated 2,450% in 2025, driven by increased use of tactics such as at-large arrests, roving patrols, worksite raids, and detention of people attending immigration court hearings or ICE check-ins. Only 4% of immigrants detained this past July had convictions for violent crimes, as did 3% of those detained during the first 14 months of the second Trump administration.[4]

ICE now directly oversees over 200 active primary detention centers. Most are overcrowded, and detainees frequently lack access to medical care and legal representation. Nearly 90% of detainees are held in facilities run by private, for-profit contractors, who manage the 20 centers with the largest average daily populations. Conditions are often inhumane at best, and there is little oversight.[5] Between January 20, 2025, and July 15, 2026, at least 52 people have died while in ICE detention, the highest level of deaths in over a decade.[6] Since the start of President Trump's deportation campaign, at least

Country of Citizenship of Individuals Detained During Operation Midway Blitz

- 47% - Mexico
- 18% - Other
- 15% - Venezuela
- 7% - Guatemala
- 5% - Ecuador
- 5% - Colombia
- 3% - Honduras



Source: Illinois Accountability Commission

two dozen individuals have been shot by federal immigration agents. In total, six individuals, three of whom were U.S. citizens, have lost their lives due to these shootings, with the majority of the incidents involving officers firing at individuals in their cars.[7]

The State of Illinois bore a disproportionate share of these enforcement actions and the terror that accompanied them. During Operation Midway Blitz, federal immigration enforcement made approximately 3,900 arrests or detentions in the greater Chicago area, according to findings cited by the Illinois Accountability Commission established by Governor JB Pritzker.[8] Testimony at the People's Hearing cited data showing that Illinois experienced the highest number of ICE arrests of any state in the country during this period — 515% above the arrest rate seen in other states. A separate TRAC immigration analysis found that 97% of the new detainees processed during "Operation Midway Blitz" in Chicago had no criminal conviction, a striking figure the Illinois Accountability Commission's own review corroborated: the Commission found that 85% of those detained had no criminal conviction, and only 3% had convictions for violent crimes. The Chicago *Sun-Times* reported that most arrests during Operation Midway Blitz took place in Chicago, although the suburban communities of Cicero, Elgin, and Chesterton, IN, experienced regular ICE activities and documented use of force by federal agents. A heartbreaking 70% of those detained last fall, totaling 2,732 people, have since been deported, according to the Chicago *Sun-Times.*[9]

The Illinois Accountability Commission's final report, published earlier this year, found that individuals from 93 countries were detained during the operation. However, 82% of all detentions were of Latin American immigrants with just under half from Mexico (47%)."

Operation Midway Blitz was characterized by high levels of violence from federal authorities directed at immigrants. As the Illinois Accountability Commission noted "Operation Midway Blitz agents regularly used force against Illinoisans without justification, including immigrants, U.S. citizens, protestors, journalists, clergy members, and bystanders."[10]

In the end, the federal government opted for staggering levels of violence and chaos to implement its vision of immigration enforcement. Protestors were injured and killed, businesses were disrupted, and the city of Chicago became a battlefield upon which due process, fairness, and justice were violated.

> **"Operation Midway Blitz was not a series of disconnected incidents, or isolated mistakes. The Commission documented repeated patterns across Chicago and surrounding communities. Mass military-style law enforcement operations, dangerous vehicle pursuit, aggressive use of force, chemical agents deployed in residential neighborhoods, discriminatory stops, warrantless arrests, intimidation of observers and bystanders, surveillance of protest activity, and conditions of detention that deprived people of due process and basic dignity."**
>
> Hina Mahmood, Executive Director, Illinois Accountability Commission



Audience members at People's Hearing in Chicago

ABOUT THE HEARING

The People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement in Chicago was held on May 20, 2026, at the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law (UIC Law). The hearing brought together community members, advocates, public officials, and civil rights leaders to document, on the public record, lived experiences of immigration enforcement and its impact on civil and human rights in the Chicago region.

The purpose of the hearing, as Chair Rochelle Garza of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights explained in her opening remarks, was to create a public record of lived experience that is often absent from official accounts of immigration enforcement — to ensure "that this community is centered in this story, ... grounded in truth," and to ensure that account "makes its way into the hands of those in power." The Chicago hearing follows the same model as the first hearing in this series, held in Minnesota in March 2026 in response to Operation Metro Surge, which produced *The People's Record: A Report on the People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement in Minnesota.*

The hearing was structured across six panels and included testimony from more than two dozen speakers representing a wide range of perspectives: immigration and civil rights attorneys, the Illinois Accountability Commission, the Office of the Mayor of Chicago, national and local advocacy and legal aid organizations, small business owners, mental health providers, educators, and directly impacted individuals and families. Several individuals testified anonymously or under aliases. A livestream of the hearing was made publicly available to ensure broad access and transparency.

The hearing was, at its core, an act of witness, an attempt by communities in one city to give testimony and establish a record of the ways in which the federal government deployed its power against them.

The People's Hearing in Chicago was convened by civil rights leaders, community organizations, and impacted individuals and families committed to advancing constitutional accountability in federal immigration enforcement. The local and national organizations listed in the acknowledgments section were central to organizing and shaping the focus of the hearing, convening affected communities and providing testimony.

> **"When those with power in our federal government engage in misinformation, when they deny, distort, or simply refuse to acknowledge what they did, we must answer with the truth. The testimony, the words of those who lived it, and the records will endure. And as long as they endure, the truth endures with them. No one can truly rewrite history when the people who lived it refuse to be silent."**
>
> Linda Tortolero, President and CEO, Latino Policy Forum

FINDINGS FROM THE PEOPLE'S HEARING

Abusive Enforcement Practices and Excessive Use of Force

Witnesses described enforcement in Chicago as large-scale, fast-moving, and highly visible, with a consistent show of force that created confusion and danger for people caught in it, including accounts of serious injuries and at least one death. Across testimony, a recurring pattern emerged: masked and often unidentified agents entering homes, workplaces, and public spaces without warrants; rapid escalation during encounters; and lasting disruption for families and communities.

> **"Our clients' accounts and bystander video reflect that many of these arrests were violent, indeed criminal. Masked men blocked cars on streets as people were returning from work or dropping off kids at school. They broke windows, pulled people out of cars, and even used Blackhawk helicopters to raid a building without warrants in the middle of the night."**
>
> **Michelle Garcia, Deputy Legal Director, Roger Baldwin Foundation and ACLU of Illinois**

One of the most serious, documented incidents of excessive force involved Marimar Martinez, a 30-year-old U.S. citizen and Montessori school teacher. According to her attorney, Christopher Parente, Martinez saw an ICE vehicle in her neighborhood on the morning of October 4, 2025, and followed it at a distance, honking her horn and warning neighbors — "La Migra, La Migra" — who were doing yard work nearby. Parente testified that the ICE vehicle swerved into her car; she stopped; and within roughly two seconds of exiting his vehicle, the agent, later identified as Charles Exum, fired his service weapon five times, striking her five times and leaving seven entry and exit wounds. Martinez was able to drive several blocks and call 911. Parente testified



Federal officers hold down a protester in the 3900 block of South Kedzie Avenue in Brighton Park on October 4, 2025. ©Anthony Vazquez/Sun-Times

that FBI agents removed her from the hospital roughly two hours later for questioning while she was still bleeding, and that she had to be returned to a second hospital for proper treatment. She was subsequently charged with assaulting and impeding a federal agent. A judge released her pretrial over the government's objection, and the case was ultimately dismissed with prejudice after surveillance video contradicted the agents' account and after Agent Exum admitted under cross-examination that Martinez had not rammed the agents' vehicle, as initially claimed. Parente testified that recovered text messages showed agents joking about the shooting, and that operation commander Gregory Bovino emailed Exum a commendation roughly three hours after the shooting, while Martinez's survival remained uncertain, extending Exum's retirement rather than opening any investigation. Parente said Martinez and her legal team are pursuing both a Federal Tort Claims Act claim against the government and efforts to refer Exum for federal prosecution.

> **"The agents claimed that they were boxed in and that's why they had to shoot her five times. We were able to obtain surveillance video that conclusively disproved that, which showed that the agents were lying about this situation, which again is why they ended up dismissing this case."**
>
> **Christopher Parente,**
> **Attorney for Marimar Martinez**

Other witnesses described a consistent pattern of unidentified, aggressive stops. Carmen Patlan, Executive Director of the Center for Immigrant Progress in Waukegan, testified that she personally witnessed CBP agents barricade a vehicle at a gas station on October 15 and smash its window without ever presenting a warrant, and that on November 7 she watched agents — including then-commander Bovino — pull two men off a sidewalk in Waukegan without ever learning their names or being able to notify their families. Patlan also testified that on the same day she witnessed roughly 19-armed agents playing rock-paper-scissors and joking about where to go next at a gas station, and that Bovino gave a Hitler salute as a van passed by. Eréndira Rendón of The Resurrection Project described a construction worker, "José," detained along with coworkers after federal agents saw a group of Mexican men working outside a job site and demanded documentation. He was held with more than 200 other people in a single room at the Broadview Processing Center before an attorney secured his release ahead of a scheduled green card hearing.



A law enforcement officer points a crowd control weapon at a protester in East Side, Chicago, Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2025.
©Anthony Vazquez/Chicago Sun-Times via AP

Testimony also described the use of force in front of children. Adam Gonzalez, General Counsel of El Valor, testified that on November 5, 2025, while dropping off his 18-month-old son at the Rayito de Sol daycare in North Center, he witnessed three armed, masked federal agents chase a staff member into the building and drag another woman into an SUV as she screamed for help, ten feet from parents dropping off infants. Inside, he found young children crying and asking whether they were going to be deported or taken to jail, and teachers emerging from hiding places where they had sheltered with children during the raid.

> **"When I walked inside the daycare, I will never get over what I saw. Children crying, asking, "Are they going to deport us? Are they going to take us away? Are we going to jail?" Three, four, and five-year-olds asking why their daycare was no longer safe, asking for their teachers, watching the adults in their lives have no answers for why their world had suddenly shattered."**
>
> **Adam Gonzalez, General Counsel, El Valor**

Community Response and Legal and Constitutional Observers

A wide network of attorneys, legal observers, and community-based rapid response teams organized to document enforcement activity, support residents, and provide legal assistance throughout the operation and its aftermath. Jennifer Crespo of the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois (HLAI) described the HLAI Rapid Response Network, made up exclusively of licensed attorneys and law students who consider themselves "officers of the court," bound by their professional obligations to respond to enforcement activity, prepare *habeas* petitions, serve as *declarants* in litigation, and provide know-your-rights training. Crespo testified that HLAI members have been tear gassed, confronted, and followed home by federal agents, and that most now keep retainer agreements with attorneys in case they themselves are detained. She described the Brighton Park neighborhood, where an armored ICE vehicle and an agent firing rounds into an occupied car left community members angry and frightened even as legal observers worked to de-escalate the situation.

> **"[Our] network is full of people who wake up, look at themselves in the mirror and ask the question: Am I going to put myself at risk today for my fellow neighbors, for my fellow attorneys, my fellow public citizens? And we have unequivocally answered yes, but it has come with having to do a risk assessment."**
>
> **Jennifer Crespo, Co-Chair, Community Outreach and former President, Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois (HLAI)**

Venu Gupta of the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights testified that enforcement tactics shifted over roughly 17 months from highly visible, large-scale raids to more targeted, harder-to-document tactics such as traffic stops and courthouse arrests — a shift she said made accountability significantly more difficult even as the underlying civil rights violations continued. The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) was repeatedly cited as a central coordinating hub for rapid response hotlines, community alerts, and know-your-rights trainings.

Sheila Bedi, Chief Strategy Officer in the Office of Mayor Brandon Johnson, described a series of executive orders issued in response to the operation: the Protecting Chicago Initiative, intended to coordinate city departments and preserve the Chicago Police Department's independence from federal immigration enforcement and the city's sanctuary status; an "ICE-free zone" order barring the use of city property to facilitate federal raids; fiscal transparency measures responding to federal cuts to the city budget; and an "ICE On Notice" order requiring the Chicago Police Department to document alleged misconduct by federal immigration agents. Bedi testified that enforcement, including outside a domestic violence courthouse on the morning of the hearing itself, had not stopped, even after the most visible phase of the operation ended.

Nonprofit organizations expanded services, offered help remotely, and found creative ways to support their communities. As Amina Barhumi, Executive Director of the Muslim Civic Coalition, explained, "multi-faith, multi-ethnic, multi-racial groups and coalitions continue to stand united, delivering know your rights training, rapid responding on signal, using whistles, sanctuary supports, opening up their homes, their community centers, feeding those who need to be fed, providing mutual aid." *Latinos Progresando* and Nourishing Hope run a joint monthly food pantry that serves as the main source of food for 50 families and senior citizens. After whistles warned of ICE agents nearby, clients began phoning to say they would not be able to pick up their food. Nubia Willman of Latinos Progresando spoke about families who chose to forgo a month's supply of food from a community pantry rather than risk being detained while collecting it. But in the spirit of solidarity and resilience that has defined Chicago's response to Operation Midway Blitz, they ultimately placed the boxes in their cars and delivered them to their families.

> **"I believe with all my heart that this administration may have chipped away at our peace, but I think they need to know that they did not come anywhere close to touching our spirit and who we are."**
>
> **Marcela Rodriguez, Executive Director, Enlace Chicago**

Due Process and Legal Infringements

Testimony described a system in which people were unable to access or rely on basic legal protections at the moments they mattered most. Michelle Garcia, Deputy Legal Director of the ACLU of Illinois, testified about two ongoing federal cases. In Castañón Nava v. Department of Homeland Security — a 2018 consent decree requiring DHS to follow the Fourth Amendment when arresting people in Illinois and four other Midwestern states without a warrant — the ACLU documented that DHS began violating the decree immediately upon the change in administration in January 2025. From June 11 to October 7, 2025, DHS's own court filings acknowledged 1,852 likely warrantless arrests by ICE in the Northern District of Illinois alone, rising to more than 3,000 when CBP arrests were included. Garcia testified that of the 1,852 people arrested by ICE during that period, only 750 remained in the country by October 22, 2025 — the rest having been deported or having left the country under duress from detention conditions — even though DHS's own records suggested thousands should have qualified for release under the consent decree.

In a second case, Moreno González v. Mullins, the ACLU and co-counsel filed a class action on behalf of individuals held at the Broadview ICE Processing Center, alleging conditions so severe they violated the Fifth Amendment's guarantee of due process and basic subsistence. At an evidentiary hearing, U.S. District Judge Robert Gettleman described Broadview as resembling "a concentration camp," after evidence showed rooms designed to hold 30 people held more than 100 people at a time, sleeping on concrete floors next to overflowing toilets with no access to soap or water. The court entered a temporary restraining order in November requiring DHS to remedy the conditions, and the parties have since agreed to extend it while the case proceeds toward trial or settlement.

> **"We have seen people's right to due process violated through rapid removal processes, limited access to legal aid, and detention without hearings, all making it almost impossible for individuals to have their fair chance at their day in court. This should be alarming to every single person in this country."**
>
> **Venu Gupta, Executive Director, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights**

Witnesses described repeated instances in which individuals actively engaged in lawful immigration processes — including asylum seekers with pending cases and green card

holders awaiting hearings — were detained anyway, sometimes after being instructed to appear for routine check-ins. One anonymous witness, testifying as "John Doe," described being stopped by unmarked vehicles on his way to lunch on a workday, never shown any signed judicial order, and told only that he was "in the country illegally" based, he believed, on the color of his skin. He testified that an agent hand-wrote his name atop a blank form and presented it to him as a signed judicial order. He was held for four months at a detention facility in Baldwin, Michigan, on a list of 15 people the government classified as "high risk" despite having no criminal record, a U.S. citizen son, and 26 years of residence and tax payments in the United States. His bond was ultimately set at $10,000, compared to the $1,500 bond he said he should have qualified for.

Attorney Christopher Parente said that the government's own conduct in the Marimar Martinez case — branding a U.S. citizen with no criminal history as a "domestic terrorist" on social media, based on claims later disproven in court, and declining to retract those statements even after dismissal — illustrated a broader pattern of due process breaking down not only in the field, but in how the government characterized its own conduct afterward. Chair Garza also noted that due process concerns in the Chicago region unfolded against the backdrop of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Noem v. Perdomo, which addressed the legal standard for immigration stops, and what witnesses described as an increase in profiling-based stops following that decision.

> **"We're seeing asylum seekers who are following the rules, attending court hearings, and complying with ICE check-ins, only to be detained, denied due process, and transferred thousands of miles away from their families."**
>
> **Fasika Alem, Program Director, United African Organization**



Jessica Aguilar and her son, John, embrace after passing diabetes medication for her husband, Carlos Aguilar, who she said was taken by unidentified agents in DeKalb on his way to work that morning, to a federal agent through a fence outside the ICE building in Broadview, IL, on Wednesday, September 24, 2025. ©AP Photo/Erin Hooley

Detention System and Conditions

Testimony described a detention system that extended far beyond a single facility. Individuals taken into custody during Operation Midway Blitz were processed first at the Broadview ICE Processing Center, a facility in a western suburb of Chicago, before being transferred — often with little or no notice to family or counsel — to detention facilities in as many as 13 states. Analysis by the Marshall Project of ICE data on 1,600 people detained during the operation's first month found that more than 380 individuals were sent to the North Lake Processing Center in Baldwin, Michigan, a former federal prison reopened in June 2025 under a private contract as the largest immigration detention facility in the Midwest. Some detainees, including children, were sent to the reopened South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas. At least 300 people were sent to the Clay County Justice Center in Indiana, which supplements its county budget through DHS detention contracts, with others sent to four additional Indiana county jails; and more than 50 people were sent to the newly established Camp East Montana at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas, described as consisting largely of tents.

Witnesses described Broadview itself in stark terms. Declarations filed in Moreno González v. Mullins described detainees who did not have attorneys and did not know how to contact one; phone systems that did not connect to the numbers detainees were given; detainees shackled at the ankles; and people sleeping on the floor with no bedding. When attorneys attempted to conduct court-ordered visits to assess conditions, officials cut the visits short, telling observers they were "interfering with operations." Eréndira Rendón of The Resurrection Project testified that people were held at Broadview for days with no beds, no showers, no cafeteria, and windows boarded up, and that community members were assaulted for demanding that people be returned to their families.

> **"Conditions were so awful they violated the Fifth Amendment rights to due process and basic needs like food and water. At a full evidentiary hearing for a temporary restraining order, Judge Gettleman described Broadview as a concentration camp. The evidence showed in rooms designed to hold 30 people that there were more than 100 people shoulder to shoulder for days on end. People were sleeping on concrete floors next to overflowing toilets, with no access to soap or (potable) water. Broadview was a place where people disappeared."**
>
> **Michelle Garcia, Deputy Legal Director, Roger Baldwin Foundation and ACLU of Illinois**

Multiple witnesses described transfers as a deliberate strategy that separated people from their communities and made it harder to challenge their detention. Immigration attorney Gloria Contreras Edin's observation from the Minnesota hearing — "Once they're transferred, they can disappear in every practical sense" — was echoed repeatedly in Chicago testimony: family members and attorneys described losing track of detained relatives for days or weeks, in some cases only locating them after video of an arrest surfaced on social media. Lisa Wright of the Chinese American Service League (CASL) described a Chinatown resident detained shortly after heart surgery who waited four weeks to receive his medication at a detention facility in Indiana, and who ultimately begged his attorney to have him deported because the pain had become unbearable.



Children cover their heads as they sit outside of a migrant shelter in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago. ©AP Photo/Erin Hooley

Mental Health and Community Harm

Testimony described psychological harm that extended well beyond individual encounters with agents and into the daily functioning of families, schools, and entire communities. Dr. Angela Sedeño, a licensed clinical psychologist and CEO of Expanded Mental Health Services of Chicago, representing roughly 260,000 residents across Albany Park, Irving Park, North Park, Logan Square, Avondale, and Hermosa, testified that about 15% of her clients reported direct experience with detention or family separation, and described age-specific patterns of trauma: separation anxiety, nightmares, and clinginess among children ages 0-6; school refusal, social withdrawal, and academic decline among children ages 7-12; and depression, hopelessness, and premature financial responsibility among teenagers, some of whom became primary earners for their families. She testified that on October 3, federal agents deployed tear gas at the front door of her clinic, exposing staff, clients — including elderly residents with asthma — and children — to chemical agents as they arrived for therapy, and that for months afterward she could not assure clients that the clinic was a safe place.

Karina Ayala Bermejo, President and CEO of Instituto del Progreso Latino, testified that the organization's roughly 250 employees experienced such acute fear that staff required medical attention for panic attacks triggered by community alert signals, and that the organization had to implement repeated "soft" and "hard" lockdowns. She described a recent graduate of the organization's programs, "Diego," who was taken from in front of his home without a warrant, denied contact with his attorney, transferred to Kentucky, and deported despite having no criminal record.

> **"ICE enforcement activity does not impact one individual. It creates disruption across the entire family system, our entire community, affecting children's sense of safety, parents' ability to work, students' attendance, mental health, transportation, childcare, and economic stability."**
>
> **Karina Ayala Bermejo, President and CEO, Instituto del Progreso Latino**

Educators described sharp drops in school attendance and engagement. Illinois Accountability Commission Executive Director Hina Mahmood testified that a teacher described the day federal agents appeared near Funston Elementary School as "the most dangerous day that my students have ever lived at school," and school principals reported students too afraid to eat in lunch programs out of fear that ICE could somehow track them if they entered their identification codes. Multiple witnesses connected this fear to broader institutional avoidance: healthcare providers described families delaying urgent medical care out of fear of encountering agents at hospitals and clinics. Advocates described a general erosion of trust in schools, hospitals, and local law enforcement that they said would take years to repair.

> **"This indiscriminate, coordinated, and systemic effort has instilled a climate of terror and fear amongst immigrant families and communities. Families hesitate to attend mosques, seek medical care, or even claim benefits that their citizen children directly need."**
>
> **Amina Barhumi, Executive Director, Muslim Civic Association**

Worker rights advocates and workers testified about the exploitation of low-wage immigrants both inside and outside their workplaces. Shelly Ruzika of Arise Chicago noted the importance of immigrant workers in Chicago. "No one eats, builds, or gets around without their labor." But immigrants, both going to and from work and at work, were a main target of Operation Midway Blitz. In addition to the direct impact of worker arrests, assaults, and abductions on their ability to feed their families, she described how bad employers have been emboldened, "taking advantage of ICE-instilled fear to violate labor laws." Often afraid to speak out, employees face harassment, verbal abuse, and dangerous working conditions including unheated facilities, are denied legally required sick leave, and are not paid for all hours worked.

> **"I have been living in Chicago for 25 years, in the United States. That is my country. I live here, I work here, I pay my taxes here, I have my family here, I have built and put down roots, therefore, I consider this my country."**
>
> **Liliana, Worker and Member, Arise Chicago**

Anonymous testimony from directly affected family members underscored the human cost behind these patterns. One woman, a mother of three, testifying as "Jane Doe," described her husband's detention on December 16th. He had no criminal record and was coerced into accepting a "voluntary" departure because he had "no other option." She described the anxiety and depression now affecting her children, and how she herself experienced a panic attack when a seven-year-old temporarily lost sight of his mother and asked for her help, unable to cope with the thought of another child potentially being separated from their parents.

Restaurant worker "Liliana Vargas," an Arise Chicago member, described her brother-in-law's four months long detention in a Mississippi facility. She detailed how he recounted the terrible conditions detainees were facing and described it as being in "hell." His capricious detention and his removal to a facility in Mississippi frightened the family so much that they all began using location tracking apps to know where each member of the family was at any given time. She lamented that she and her family are no longer free in her city, in what she considers to be her country.



Students from Farragut Career Academy protest under the Little Village Arch against the deployment of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood, Wednesday, Oct. 29, 2025. ©AP Photo/Talia Sprague

Economic Impact on Local Businesses and Communities

Witnesses described severe and continuing economic disruption, particularly along commercial corridors closely associated with Chicago's Latino communities. Jennifer Aguilar, Executive Director of the Little Village Chamber of Commerce, testified that 26th Street — home to more than 1,000 businesses and often described as the city's "second Magnificent Mile" — generates more than $900 million in annual sales revenue, much of it dependent on regional tourism tied to the corridor's cultural identity. She testified that business owners reported revenue losses of 40% to 70% compared to the prior year, that the 54-year-old Little Village Mexican Independence Day Parade nearly did not go forward amid safety concerns, and that turnout, when it did, was roughly half of the parade's typical half-million attendees. She described a November 8 incident in which federal agents deployed tear gas and displayed weapons at 26th Street and Pulaski in the middle of a Saturday morning, after which "the energy of Little Village was gone" for an extended period.

Marcos Carbajal, second-generation owner of Carnitas Uruapan, a family restaurant operating in Chicago for 51 years, testified that his three locations — in Little Village, Gage Park, and Pilsen — saw revenue drop by 40%, 25%, and 20%, respectively at the height of the operation. Carbajal said the damage went beyond lost revenue:

He testified that the type of federal pandemic-era relief extended to small businesses during COVID-19 — e.g., loans tied to documented revenue loss, employee retention credits — has not been made available for businesses harmed by immigration enforcement.

> **"You cannot market against fear. There's no promotion, no discount, no outreach strategy that brings people out of their homes when they're afraid to be in public."**
>
> **Marcos Carbajal, Carnitas Uruapan**

Nubia Willman of Latinos Progresando testified that the Cermak Corridor in the Marshall Square neighborhood lost four businesses due to the disruption, with surviving businesses reporting revenue losses of 20%-50%. Using the alias 'Susana,' a small business owner and massage therapist in Pilsen and Little Village, testified to having to take out personal loans from friends to keep her practice open after clients stopped coming for fear of encountering agents near her business.

Testimony documented huge damage to Little Village as a shopping and cultural tourism destination by people from outside the neighborhood and outside Chicago and Illinois. Some testimony noted that Illinois residents outside immigrant communities sometimes assumed the operation had little economic impact on them. However, recent research documented the severe economic damage of Operation Midway Blitz in non-Latino/non-immigrant communities. Findings confirm that the health of the overall Chicagoland economy depends on the labor of Latino and other immigrants, their entrepreneurship, and their buying power. A study by the Great Cities Institute at the University of Illinois Chicago found that residents of immigrant neighborhoods continued to visit businesses in their own neighborhoods but were much less likely to make "cross-community" trips to non- or low-immigrant neighborhoods. The number of "cross-community" trips to retail businesses dropped by 9%, and the number of "cross-community" visits to restaurants dropped by 10%. Resulting losses to retail shops and restaurants in non-immigrant communities totaled $1.26 billion, and foregone local sales-tax revenue was $107 million.[11]

> **"A corridor normally associated with culture, celebration, and family suddenly became associated with fear and violence."**
>
> **Jennifer Aguilar, Executive Director, Little Village Chamber of Commerce**

THE PEOPLE'S KEY FINDINGS

1. Escalation of immigration enforcement actions caused widespread disruption and harm.

During Operation Midway Blitz, immigration enforcement activity increased sharply in frequency, visibility, and intensity across Chicago and the surrounding region. Testimony described enforcement actions in homes, workplaces, schools, courthouses, and commercial corridors, creating fear and confusion within communities. The operation resulted in thousands of arrests, the shooting of a U.S. citizen bystander, and sustained disruption to daily life. While the most visible phase of the operation has ended, many of its harms are ongoing.

2. Enforcement practices were carried out without accountability or federal oversight.

Enforcement actions were routinely conducted without clear officer identification, explanation of authority, or presentation of warrants. Witnesses described agents who declined to identify themselves, entered private property without judicial warrants, and left families unable to obtain basic information about what happened to their relatives. No internal investigations or officer suspensions occurred during the operation's first month despite documented use of deadly and excessive force.

3. Due process protections enshrined in law and the Constitution were denied in practice.

These violations continued despite court orders and other judicial actions. Individuals were detained and processed in ways that prevented them from understanding or asserting their rights, including racial and ethnic profiling, denial of access to counsel, and detention despite valid documentation, pending asylum claims, or existing consent decrees governing warrantless arrests. New "mega master" court procedures processed as many as 180 people before four judges in a single morning, with missed hearings resulting in automatic deportation orders.

4. Individuals were effectively "disappeared" within the system following detention.

People taken into custody at the Broadview ICE Processing Center were frequently transferred, with little or no notice, to facilities in as many as 13 states, among them Michigan, Indiana, and Texas. Families, attorneys, and community organizations repeatedly reported being unable to determine where a detained person was being held, sometimes for weeks, undermining any meaningful ability to challenge detention or provide legal support.

5. Detention conditions and practices endangered lives and restricted individuals' ability to exercise their rights.

Conditions at Broadview were described in sworn declarations and in an evidentiary hearing — where a federal judge likened the facility to "a concentration camp" — as severely overcrowded, with people sleeping on concrete floors next to overflowing toilets and without reliable access to counsel, food, water, or medical care. Conditions at out-of-state transfer facilities were similarly documented as deplorable, including delays of weeks in providing needed medication.

6. Federal agents used excessive and, in at least one documented case, deadly force, including against a U.S. citizen bystander.

The killing of Silverio Villegas-González, a Mexican national, and the shooting of Marimar Martinez, a U.S. citizen and Montessori school teacher who was shot five times by an ICE agent, stand as the most serious-documented uses of force during the operation, but testimony described a broader pattern: chemical weapons deployed at least 63 times, often indiscriminately, near schools, a mental health clinic, and residential streets; and physical force used in nearly two-thirds of the destabilizing incidents documented by independent researchers.

7. Enforcement practices caused lasting mental health harm to children, families, and communities.

Testimony described children experiencing fear, anxiety, and disruption to their education after witnessing or being affected by enforcement actions, including a deployment of tear gas at a mental health clinic's front door. Families reported changes in daily behavior, including avoiding schools, workplaces, and public services. Mental health and community organizations described a surge in demand for services that has exceeded available resources.

8. Local economies and small businesses, particularly along historic immigrant commercial corridors, suffered the most severe and continuing harm.

Business owners along 26th Street in Little Village and other Latino commercial corridors reported significant revenue losses, business closures, and canceled or poorly attended cultural events. Witnesses testified that, unlike the COVID-19 pandemic, no comparable federal relief has been made available to businesses harmed by immigration enforcement, and that the economic damage — concentrated almost entirely in immigrant and Latino neighborhoods — was, in the words of one witness, not a coincidence but a consequence of the operation's design.



Protesters gather and march at Michigan Avenue and East Ida B. Wells Drive to demand that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) leave Chicago and demand no federal law enforcement presence or troops in Chicago, Illinois, United States, on September 9, 2025. ©Kyle Mazza/NurPhoto via AP

THE PEOPLE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conduct a full and independent investigation into Operation Midway Blitz.

Congressional authorities should initiate a comprehensive investigation into the planning, execution, and oversight of Operation Midway Blitz, including the actions of leadership within the White House, the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Customs and Border Protection, as well as individual officers involved in enforcement activities. In addition, internal federal agency oversight bodies — including the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, the DHS Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and relevant congressional committees — should initiate independent, parallel civil rights investigations.

2. Establish independent oversight and public reporting requirements for immigration enforcement operations.

Federal agencies should be required to publicly report key data on enforcement operations, including arrests, transfers, use-of-force incidents, and deaths in custody. A use-of-force policy with clear limits and restrictions should be codified and enforced.

3. Protect the constitutional rights of both targeted individuals and observers during enforcement actions.

Federal agencies must require officers to identify themselves by name and agency, present judicial warrants before entering private property, and respect the free-speech rights of individuals and community members to observe and document enforcement activity in public spaces. This should include requiring and enforcing the use of body cameras, prohibiting the use of masks by agents, and ensuring that state and local law enforcement retain the authority to investigate and refer potential crimes committed by federal officers for prosecution. Federal agencies should be required to cooperate with state and local law enforcement officials, providing access to potential crime scenes and sharing evidence.

4. Strengthen and enforce due process protections and establish reliable tracking systems for detained individuals.

Profiling based on race, ethnicity, occupation, language, or accent should be banned. Officers should be required to verify a person's immigration status before detaining them. Federal agencies should ensure immediate access to legal counsel and interpreters, and a real-time, publicly accessible tracking system should be implemented to allow families and attorneys to locate individuals and maintain contact throughout the detention process.

5. Reform detention practices and fully enforce standards, at Broadview and at out-of-state transfer facilities alike.

Minimum standards for detention conditions — including decent food, water, sanitation, medical care, and access to legal counsel — should be enforced through regular, independent inspections, and states and members of Congress should have a clearly enforceable right to inspect ICE facilities, including out-of-state transfer facilities where Chicago-area detainees have been sent.

6. Limit the use of interstate transfers.

Transfers of detained individuals across state lines should be limited. Where transfers are necessary, individuals should be held in nearby states, in circumstances that do not interfere with their safety or their access to counsel or family. Both families and attorneys should be notified before any transfer takes place.

7. Support community recovery and address the broader impacts of enforcement on families, workers, and local economies.

State and local governments, in coordination with federal partners, should provide resources to support affected communities, including mental health services for students and families, and targeted economic relief for small businesses and commercial corridors — comparable to relief provided during the COVID-19 pandemic — along with clear protections against enforcement actions at hospitals, clinics, schools, daycare centers, courthouses, and places of worship. Illinois should explore the recommendation shared by Marcela Rodriguez, Executive Director of Enlace Chicago, that a portion of the tax revenue that is generated by the businesses and the families of the community be reallocated to come back to the community as an economic recovery fund.



Marchers on 18th Street in Pilsen protesting the Trump administration's immigrant detention and deportation efforts.. ©Zubaer Khan / Sun-Times

ENDNOTES

1 Independent analyses — including the Illinois Accountability Commission's final report and Chicago Tribune review of Deportation Data Project records — place the number of people arrested and detained at closer to 3,900

2 Maria Cancian, Nissi Cantu, Eileen Powell, and Tara Watson, "How many children are affected by parental immigrant detention?" Brookings Institution, May 13, 2026, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-many-children-are-affected-by-parental-immigrant-detention/

3 The Brookings Institution estimates that about 205,000 children, including 145,000 who are U.S. citizens, have had a parent detained during this administration, and more than 22,000 have had all their co-resident parents detained

4 Julia Ingram, "ICE arrested a record number of people without criminal records in summer enforcement surge, new data shows," CBS News, August 27, 2026, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ice-arrests-record-high-july-new-data/ and Maggie Green, Laura Romero, and Matt Rivers, "Just 3% of recent ICE detainees had a violent felony conviction, government data shows," ABC News, June 12, 2026, https://abcnews.com/US/3-recent-ice-detainees-violent-felony-conviction-government/story?id=132855202

5 Isobel Mohyeddin, "The 2025 Reconciliation Bill Allows Private Prison Execs to Cash In on Cruelty," National Immigration Law Center, December 18, 2025, https://www.nilc.org/articles/the-2025-reconciliation-bill-allows-private-prison-execs-to-cash-in-on-cruelty/

6 "Dying in Detention: Rising Deaths in an Expanding U.S. Immigration Detention System," News Release, Human Rights Watch, June 25, 2026, https://www.hrw.org/report/2026/06/25/dying-in-detention/rising-deaths-in-an-expanding-us-immigration-detention-system

7 Allison McCann, "At Least 24 People Have Been Shot At By Federal Immigration Agents Since Last Year," New York Times, Published July 8, 2026, Updated September 21, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/07/08/us/immigration-agent-shootings-vehicles.html

8 Ilinois Accountability Commission, Final Report, April 30, 2026, https://ilac.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/ilac/documents/final-report/IAC-Final-Report-April-2026.pdf

9 Lauren FitzPatrick, Chicago Sun-Times and Aiden Loury, WBEZ, "Operation Midway Blitz by the numbers: 68 Days, 4000 Detained, 2,700 Deported," September 8, 2026, https://chicago.suntimes.com/graphics/immigration/2026/midway-blitz-by-the-numbers/

10 Illinois Accountability Commission, Final Report, *op cit.*

11 Matthew D. Wilson and T. William Lester, "Hunkering Down: The Hidden Economic Cost of Federal Immigration Enforcement in Cook County, IL," Issue Brief, Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois Chicago, September 2026, https://uofi.app.box.com/s/shv1c9qkj71wq4cf9yctfwlj5mil5o62

12 Graphic shows the 5 municipalities within the 14-county Chicago metropolitan statistical area ("Chicagoland") that had the largest numbers of arrests documented in ICE statistics during the 68 days of Operation Midway Blitz, based on Deportation Data Project data. The 1,887 arrests shown exclude people detained elsewhere in the metro area's 284 municipalities and 14 counties. There is no single accepted figure for total arrests during the ICE operation. The Chicago Sun-Times estimates that 3,841 people were "initially detained at a Chicago-area immigration facility and arrests of people in the Chicago area or nearby in Indiana" during that 68-day period, using data from the Deportation Data Project, which accessed ICE databases through legal action. See "Operation Midway Blitz by the Numbers," Chicago Sun-Times, September 8, 2026, https://chicago.suntimes.com/graphics/immigration/2026/midway-blitz-by-the-numbers/. Other estimates of total arrests range from 3,900 to 4,400 or more; some estimates include a longer time period, September 8 — December 31, 2025 (including the second brief ICE surge from December 16-18), and some include arrests for the entire state of Illinois

13 Danny Hakim and Nicole Hong, "Prosector Resigns, Saying U.S. Attorney Mishandled Chicago Protest Case," New York Times, September 25, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/25/us/chicago-federal-prosecutor-resigns-broadview-six.html?eafs_enabled=false and Mecklenburg retirement letter, posted on X by Jon Seidel, https://x.com/SeidelContent/status/2103519217592967185

AGENDA

The People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement: Chicago

DATE: Wednesday, May 20, 2026

LOCATION: UIC Law School, 300 S. State St., Chicago, IL 60604

LIVE-STREAMED: https://hispfed.info/CHIforum

The People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement was a public forum rooted in the long civil rights tradition of community fact-finding and record-building. Designed to inform federal oversight and accountability efforts, the hearing gathered and preserved on-the-record testimony about how federal immigration enforcement affects constitutional protections, civil rights, and community safety.

ABOUT THE PANELS

PANEL 1: Operation Midway Blitz: What Happened

This panel will establish a clear factual record of Operation Midway Blitz as the central enforcement action in Chicago. Testimony will document the scale of the operation, how it was carried out, and what occurred on the ground, including enforcement tactics, coordination across agencies, and immediate impacts on communities.

PANEL 2: Ongoing Enforcement in Chicago, What Is Still Happening

This panel will examine how immigration enforcement has continued after Operation Midway Blitz in more targeted and less visible ways. Testimony will focus on current enforcement patterns, including traffic stops, check-ins, and daily arrests, as well as how tactics have shifted and how communities are continuing to experience enforcement.

PANEL 3A: Community-Wide Disruption from Immigration Enforcement

This panel will examine how Operation Midway Blitz and ongoing immigration enforcement have disrupted daily life across Chicago's diverse communities. Testimony from community organizations will focus on the broader impact beyond individual cases, including reduced access to services and disruptions to the institutions residents rely on. The panel will explore how enforcement actions affect entire neighborhoods and the organizations supporting them.

PANEL 3B: Community-Wide Disruption from Immigration Enforcement

This panel will examine the effects of immigration enforcement on work, businesses, health care, and schools across Chicago. Testimony will focus on workforce disruptions, business losses, reduced economic activity, changes in school attendance, and barriers to accessing care. Speakers will address how these disruptions affect families' ability to work, meet basic needs, and participate in community life.

PANEL 4A: Impacted Individuals and Families

This panel will center lived experiences tied directly to Operation Midway Blitz and ongoing enforcement in Chicago. Impacted individuals, community leaders, and service providers will address family separation, detention, fear of daily activities, economic instability, and barriers to legal and social support. Testimony will also explore the emotional toll on individuals and families and the support they need.

PANEL 4B: Impacted Individuals and Families

This panel will continue documenting the human cost of Operation Midway Blitz and ongoing enforcement through testimony from impacted individuals and people working closely with them. Perspectives from workers, business owners, legal counsel, and community services will address the consequences for livelihoods, family stability, and access to justice. Testimony will connect individual experiences to the lasting effects of enforcement on daily life.



People's Hearing Chicago Chairs Rochelle Garza and Marty Castro

FULL HEARING TRANSCRIPT

Introduction

Alejandra Palacios

Staff Attorney and Professor, University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) School of Law

Good Afternoon, everyone. My name is Alejandra Palacios, and I am a staff attorney and professor here at University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) School of Law. It is my pleasure to welcome you to our law school for the People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement here in Chicago. We are honored to be hosting this event at our institution, as we are committed to training future lawyers in the fair administration of justice, upholding the rule of law, and promoting integrity within our justice system. It is especially meaningful to host the People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement at UIC Law because we have a deep-rooted history in activism and mobilization in support of civil rights and human rights movements.

This hearing is a crucial part of fighting for accountability because it creates a platform for victims to share their stories, ensuring transparency and restoring dignity to our community. And with that, I will pass it on to our wonderful panelists. Thank you.

This hearing is about centering community in what happened in Chicago, so that this story is grounded in truth. It is about ensuring that this truth doesn't get lost, that it reaches those in power, and that we force people to listen and take action.

Rochelle Garza, Chair, United States Commission on Civil Rights

Rochelle Garza

Chair, United States Commission on Civil Rights

Good afternoon, everyone. I want to thank our hosts here, UIC Law School, for giving us an opportunity and hosting the People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement and Civil Rights in Chicago. I also want to say a special thank you to Frankie Miranda from the Hispanic Federation, Katharine Pichardo from Latino Victory, Luis Miranda from the Miranda Family, and the Texas Civil Rights Project, that have put in a lot of effort and time into creating this convening and providing us with this kind of forum.

My name is Rochelle Garza. I'm the Chair of the United States Commission on Civil Rights. I appreciate the invitation to moderate this convening alongside Marty Castro, who is the former Chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. And for those of you that need some background on what we're doing here today, it is about accountability.

It is about documenting what happened in Chicago and making sure that we tell our stories. That community is centered in this story, and the telling of this story is grounded in truth. It is about ensuring that that doesn't get lost somewhere, and that this makes its way to the hands of those in power, and that we force people to listen and to do something about what's happened.

The People's Hearing really started off as a concept, as a conversation between the folks that I mentioned earlier. We wanted to do something. We wanted to ensure that there was some accountability because what happened here in Chicago, happened in Los Angeles, happened in Minneapolis and St. Paul. It happened all over the country. It happened in my home state of Texas, and it is still happening. So the origin of this was to create a space for all of these communities to come together, to talk about what happened, and to produce a report. We were able to do that in Minnesota. We had a hearing in March of this year and listened to the community members, the community response, the resiliency in the face of just insurmountable challenges.

And that was a report published by the Hispanic Federation, just yesterday. It is available online on the Hispanic Federation website. But I do want to ground us in some facts here: 400,000 people have been detained in this country by immigration enforcement since the Trump Administration started.

> **A really heartbreaking fact is that 145,000 US citizen children do not have one of their parents in their household because of that enforcement; 22,000 of those kids don't have either of their parents because of those enforcement efforts.**
>
> **Rochelle Garza, Chair,**
> **United States Commission on Civil Rights**

And a really heartbreaking fact is that 145,000 US citizen children do not have one of their parents in their household because of that enforcement; 22,000 of those kids don't have either of their parents because of those enforcement efforts. You know, I'm a mother to two really young girls. I live on the Texas-Mexico border, and it just breaks my heart to think that that is happening to my neighbors, to my friends, to people I care about, to people I don't even know, frankly, people that I will never meet in my life.

It breaks my heart as an American to know that that is happening. So, thank you for being here, for participating in this effort, for telling your story, for listening, and with compassion, because that's what we need to exercise right now more than ever. So, with that, I'm going to turn it over to Marty Castro to give us a few words before we begin.

Marty Castro

Former Chair, United States Commission on Civil Rights

Thank you, Chair Garza. It's an honor to be part of this process. Thank you for including me, and, I'm very proud of the work that you've done because when I was the Chair of the Civil Rights Commission, the first Latino appointed by President Obama, the first African American president, I often wondered, would I do a good enough job that they would have another Latino or Latina eventually succeed me?

And I'm glad that you are the third. And I'm also glad that while you're grounded in who you are and where you come from, you are doing this to help every American and every resident in this country. It's not just about immigrants, it's not just about Latinos, you are the Chair for all Americans, and I'm very proud of that.

So thank you for the opportunity to be here today. And thank you to the organizers, and thank you to all of you who are here with us today and those who are going to be testifying today. I've been asked to give a little bit of a background as to why this is important to me, but also why this hearing is important to Chicago.

From my perspective, when I think about the history, not only my family history, but also the history of Latinos in Chicago, and the history of Latinos in the United States, and the history of our government and its interaction with our communities, I think it's important to harken back to the Roman poet Terence, who once said, "Nothing human is alien to me."

Think about that. Nothing human is alien to me. But today, this government of ours has sought to dehumanize us, and we know what happens when any community is dehumanized. That road leads to a very dark place, and it is up to each and every one of us, and the people we're going to hear from today have been on the front lines, to ensure that that darkness stops, that that darkness recedes, and that the light returns.

Here in Chicago, we have been fighting the good fight for generations, and many of us have been here, and our families have been here, for generations. My grandfather and grandmother arrived here in Chicago 101 years ago, so we've been here a long time. But also, there are folks who arrived just yesterday, and this is about all of them, and those of us who have come here from other places, not just from Mexico or from Latin America.

> **We must begin to prepare for the process of accountability today. And the work of the People's Hearing, and the work of the Illinois Accountability Commission and others, will lay the groundwork for what will come after, because we will get through this, and there will be a process that will use this information to make sure that those who are denying people justice meet their own justice.**
>
> **Marty Castro, Former Chair, United States Commission on Civil Rights**

What we saw here in the streets of Chicago was that they did not just target Latinos. They did not just target immigrants, and this is not the first time this has happened to us. This is the third time in our nation's history that the federal government has rounded us up, including United States citizens, and sent us to countries that we were not born in, and those that were here lawfully and sent back even though they didn't have to be sent back.

So this is not new to us, but it is up to us to ensure that this does not happen again, and the only way to do that is to show everyone, to document everything, because this is about history. We must document the history because if we don't, we will be doomed to repeat it. This is also about accountability, as Chair Garza

said, because if we don't start the documentation now while the facts are still fresh, while the information is still available to us, we're not going to be able to wait two, three, four years from now.

We must begin to prepare for the process of accountability today. And the work of the People's Hearing, and the work of the Illinois Accountability Commission and others, will lay the groundwork for what will come after, because we will get through this, and there will be a process that will use this information to make sure that those who are denying people justice meet their own justice.

And again, this is about democracy. It's about ensuring that we're protecting people. We're protecting the rule of law when we do this. And this isn't about politics or Democrat or Republican. This is about what this country believes in, what this country has promised, and what we have done to meet that promise.

We have defended this country since the beginning, since the Revolutionary War. In fact, the first Medal of Honor winner, Joseph De Castro, received the Medal of Honor for his gallantry in Gettysburg. So are we not Americans enough already?

Marty Castro, Former Chair,
United States Commission on Civil Rights

When I chaired the Civil Rights Commission (it's hard to believe it was 11 years ago), we issued this report, "With Liberty and Justice for All." Now, mind you, as I said, President Obama, who I love dearly and I'm very proud to have been his appointee, nonetheless, the Obama administration, with unaccompanied minors, were denying people in custody, in detention, access to lawyers.

So we went down to the border, and we visited detention centers run by ICE and run by for-profit prison companies, and we detailed the violations that were occurring, because it wasn't about politics. It was about protecting the civil rights of everyone. And so today is that same thing. This isn't about casting aspersions on one party or one particular leader.

It's about what this country stands for. We have paid for our American citizenship with our dearest blood. It's appropriate that this hearing takes place just a few days before Memorial Day, because here in Chicago and throughout the United States, when you look at Latinos and immigrants and people of color, we have served this nation with our dearest children.

We have defended this nation with our lives. Latinos in particular have been the most highly decorated military veterans in the history of this United States, and we all have those stories. I'm sitting here because of my father in the Navy, my uncle who was left, wounded, on the battlefield in Korea and won a Purple Heart.

We have defended this country since the beginning, since the Revolutionary War. In fact, the first Medal of Honor winner, Joseph De Castro, no relation to me as far as I know, received the Medal of Honor for his gallantry in Gettysburg. So are we not Americans enough already? Yet we continue to prove it.

So this hearing and the work that we're doing here and the work that the Chair will do in Los Angeles and the reports that will be issued, it is my hope will be part of a process that the United States Commission on Civil Rights will take up because it is, unlike any other entity, the nation's conscience on civil rights, so that when all is said and done, not only are we making an accounting of history, but we shall be making history of our own when we make sure that those who committed these crimes and atrocities are brought to justice.

Thank you.

Rochelle Garza:

Thank you so much, Chairman Castro. We're lucky to have you with us today. It's an honor for me. Gatherings like this are important because they allow communities to speak directly to their experiences and ensure that their voices are heard. So, we are going to hear from experts, advocates, individuals directly impacted by enforcement actions, and the goal of today's program is to create that space for testimony, dialogue, and documentation as we have said.

Before we begin, we just have a few quick notes. The event is being live-streamed and recorded. We do ask folks in the audience to be mindful to utilize the transition periods for any major moving around, so we don't disrupt the recording process. And for awareness, members of the media may also be in and out throughout the hearing.

Our panelists will have six minutes each for remarks so that we can hear from everyone that has been scheduled today. There is a clock up here. I can't see it, but y'all can see it. So please stay within your allotted six minutes. We are on a tight schedule. We want to make sure everybody is heard, and we deeply appreciate your coming here today.

Today obviously is going to be difficult. It is going to bring up a lot of emotions and strong feelings, and we recognize that behind each person that is testifying is not just a person, but their family, a child, a parent, a friend, a community member that has been deeply impacted.

So we are incredibly grateful to Humboldt Park Health for providing mental health support to those testifying or attending this hearing. We have Soledad Garcia and Jose Manuel Rodriguez, who are available to help anyone that needs support in English or Spanish. They can be found just outside of the hallway. Please utilize these resources. I know it's heavy, and we want to make sure that you all feel supported.

So to those sharing today, thank you, and to everyone listening, may we hear with compassion, humanity, and a shared goal of justice.

And with that, we're going to go ahead and begin with our first discussion, Panel One, Operation Midway Blitz: What Happened?



What happened in Chicago and the surrounding area was not typical immigration enforcement. Federal agents operated in ways that created danger, intimidation, and chaos.

Linda Tortolero, President and CEO, Latino Policy Forum



From Left to Right: Hina Mahmood, Executive Director, Illinois Accountability Commission; Sasha Reyes, Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project (FLAP); Carmen Patlan, Executive Director, Center for Immigrant Progress; Eréndira Rendón, Vice President of Immigrant Justice at The Resurrection Project; Linda Tortolero, President and CEO, Latino Policy Forum

PANEL 1

Operation Midway Blitz: What Happened

Rochelle Garza:

This panel is going to examine immigration enforcement practices during Operation Midway Blitz, and civil rights implications here in Chicago and the broader Illinois region. Our panelists are going to help us understand what enforcement practices looked like, what types of civil rights violations were reported, and how local advocates and community members responded.

Let me go ahead and introduce our panelists. We have Linda Tortolero from Latino Policy Forum, Eréndira Rendón from the Resurrection Project, Carmen Patlan from the Center for Immigrant Progress, and Sasha Reyes from the Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project. And we will be joined by Hina Mahmood from the Illinois Accountability Commission when she arrives.

So we'll go ahead and start with you, Linda, if you would get us started.

Linda Tortolero

President and CEO, Latino Policy Forum

Thank you. My name is Linda Tortolero, and I'm the President and CEO of the Latino Policy Forum. I also serve as commissioner to the Illinois Accountability Commission, which has been a tremendous honor for me. I'm a daughter of Mexican immigrants and proud to be a Chicagoan.

By catalyzing policy change, the Latino Policy Forum works to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and strengthen community leadership. The Forum convenes and leads Welcome to Illinois, a coalition of more than 150 organizations, to address the threats

presented by the current federal administration. In meetings and frequent communications, the coalition members receive current information, learn about best practices, and organize for advocacy, public education, and other collaborative activities.

> **We also learned how challenging it is for children to feel a sense of belonging when there is no safety in their homes and communities.**
>
> **Linda Tortolero**

Operation Midway Blitz was a large-scale federal immigration enforcement operation that directly targeted immigrant and Latino communities across Chicago and surrounding areas. This operation involved masked agents, aggressive tactics, arrests without judicial warrants, and a level of fear and confusion that disrupted daily life and public trust in federal institutions. What happened in Chicago and the surrounding area was not typical immigration enforcement. Federal agents operated in ways that created danger, intimidation, and chaos.

Residents reported agents breaking windows of cars, using force, deploying chemical agents, detaining people, and kidnapping people, and creating situations where people did not know who was acting under what authority or what rights they had at that moment. We now have a better understanding of the broader community effects, including heightened fear of institutions, reduced engagement with schools and healthcare systems, and social isolation within immigrant communities due to the federal overreach of ICE and CBP.

Operation Midway Blitz has intensified exponentially a climate of chronic stress among our immigrant communities. During the public hearings of the Illinois Accountability Commission, I was very moved and alarmed by the accounts of the psychological harm to children due to excessive abuses of enforcement, family separation, kidnapping, and deportation.

One witness explained how children and young people may feel that belonging is conditional and that self-hate can be a long-term effect when there is a sense of identity threatened. We also learned how challenging it is for children to feel a sense of belonging when there is no safety in their homes and communities.

Accountability and justice may take longer for our communities than it should, and I know that so many of us fight for a safer, healthier, and happier future for our children and youth. It is important that we also highlight examples of legislative actions that we have taken in the wake of Operation Midway Blitz.

Latino Policy Forum, in partnership with other immigration, civil rights, and education advocates, fought for HB1312, which seeks to limit immigration enforcement at colleges, daycares, courthouses, and hospitals. Under the provisions of this law, HB1312, these institutions must implement enhanced protections to help strengthen the safety of children, students, patients, and individuals seeking justice.

For children and students especially, this law fosters their ability to thrive in a safe, nurturing, learning environment. Also, last fall, Illinois passed a critical bill to protect immigrant rights to due process by expanding the Cook County Public Defender's jurisdiction to include representation of county residents, regardless of immigration status, in deportation procedures beyond state lines.

For months, ICE and CPB agents have transported and detained immigrants to other states, such as Indiana or Tennessee, with less immigrant-friendly judges, and detainees attended hearings without legal representation. Research shows that individuals have ten times more probability of not being deported when they have legal representation.

The Welcome to Illinois Coalition supported a budget increase for the County Public Defender's Office, which it now has.

When those with power in our federal government engage in misinformation, when they deny, distort, or simply refuse to acknowledge what they did, we must answer with the truth. The

testimony, the words of those who lived it, and the records will endure. And as long as they endure, the truth endures with them. No one can truly rewrite history when the people who lived it refuse to be silent. Documenting testimony and gathering evidence as we are doing today is about what we want to see for our present living situation in our country, but is also about the hope for the future.

Together, we must fight for the end of these abuses and that future generations will never let this happen again. Thank you so much.

Eréndira Rendón

Vice President, Immigrant Justice at The Resurrection Project

Buenas tardes. I am Eréndira Rendón. I'm Vice President of Immigrant Justice at The Resurrection Project. I'm from Oaxaca, Mexico. I'm a DACA recipient, and I've been doing this work my entire adult life. The reason why at TRP we do this work every day is because we believe that people deserve to live a full, beautiful, ordinary life where they can just go to work and send their kids to school.

I want to tell you the story about Effi. Effi is a U.S. citizen; her husband, José, was undocumented. During Operation Midway Blitz, one day José went to work. He works in construction, and he works with other Mexicans. They go into the house and they're working, and around 11:30 or so, they had finished for the day, and they started loading their tools in the truck when Federal agents saw them and so they pulled up.

> **What federal agents saw were Mexicans that were working and so that was enough for them to go up to each one and start asking for documentation.**
>
> **Eréndira Rendón, Vice President, Immigrant Justice at The Resurrection Project**

What federal agents saw were Mexicans that were working and so that was enough for them to go up to each one and start asking for documentation.

They arrested several folks from that jobsite because they were outside and then they were detained at the Broadview Detention Center with over 200 people in one room. During that time, José was actually able to obtain an attorney and thankfully, the attorney was able to get him out right before his actual green card hearing and he is now a green card holder.

Before this operation, it was actually really normal to just go around, to go to work every single day, it was very normal to be able to get a driver's license, to be able to work hard and be able to provide for your family. It was heartbreaking that it was the fact that you had to be at work and be outside for your work and that's what was hurting us. Everything that the government could have done to attack us, they did. Everything from racial profiling to abductions and kidnappings, breaking windows, using excessive force, subjecting our people to inhumane conditions, moving them around from one detention center to another, and failing to locate individuals or provide secure telephone lines for them to be able to communicate with their attorneys. All of that was done, and on top of that, particularly for Latino immigrants, mandatory detention, which continues to be expansive, especially in some of the other districts of the U.S.

> **It was a direct attack on Latinos. Direct attack on particularly Mexican and Venezuelan immigrants.**
>
> **Eréndira Rendón**

So what has happened is a complete breakdown of everything that we had built to be able to protect as many immigrants as possible. And this happened at the same time as we would go around and we would say this, everything that is being done was breaking the law, and we were told by the federal government that it was not.

People across this country could not believe that it had gotten so bad in Chicago. They could not let themselves

It's not a small thing to ask someone to share their story. We do this work because numbers aren't people. You can't empathize with us if you can't see us. And so we want to make sure that we continue to document our stories.

Eréndira Rendón

believe that it was possible. And our people were being made invisible twice. Once by the kidnappings themselves, and once because we refused to believe what was happening. So we built dashboards, and you can still go on our website and see how many people were requesting assistance every single week — and where they were from. Overwhelmingly Mexicans, followed by Venezuelans. It was a direct attack on Latinos. Direct attack on particularly Mexican and Venezuelan immigrants.

So we had to start sharing our stories on social media and sharing stories through daily press conferences, through weekly press conferences, to make sure that folks were aware of what was happening. And we had to do that while keeping the most vulnerable people out of the spotlight, and that was a very difficult process to be able to do.

Every family that has stepped up in front of a microphone for us has made a calculation. It's not a small thing to ask someone to share their story. We do this work because numbers aren't people. You can't empathize with us if you can't see us. And so we want to make sure that we continue to document our stories.

I want to thank the Hispanic Federation for putting this together and doing this across the country, because it is important that our stories be documented. Just a reminder that at Broadview, people were held for days with no beds, no showers, no cafeteria, and not even a window, as they were all boarded up. Our brave community members were assaulted on a daily basis for demanding that our laws be respected and our community members return to their homes.

We need to make sure that we don't stop fighting for what we have won in the past, as Linda mentioned. I'll close where I started, with a whole lot of love for our community and for our people. The love that even under the worst pressure this country has put in our lifetime, we have shown up for each other. We have organized, we refuse to disappear, we're still here, and we're not going to go back. Thank you.



From Left to Right: Sasha Reyes, Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project (FLAP); Carmen Patlan, Executive Director, Center for Immigrant Progress; Eréndira Rendón, Vice President of Immigrant Justice at The Resurrection Project

Carmen Patlan

Executive Director, Center for Immigrant Progress

Good afternoon. My name is Carmen Patlan, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Center for Immigrant Progress located in Waukegan, Illinois. CIP serves immigrant and historically underserved communities throughout Lake County and is providing advocacy, legal education, emergency preparedness support, wellness navigation, rapid response coordination, and community stabilization services.

As someone who came to this country as an undocumented child alongside my family, this work is deeply personal to me. Our organization operates from a place of lived experience, trust, and accompaniment. During periods of heightened immigration enforcement, our role was to help, and continues to be to help, families access accurate information, legal support, wellness resources, and emergency stabilization services.

> **I want to share with you what I personally witnessed in my community, that the abductions aren't just happening in Chicago. They're happening in our suburbs. They're happening in places where families are simply trying to live their lives.**
>
> **Carmen Patlan, Executive Director, Center for Immigrant Progress**

I want to share with you what I personally witnessed in my community, that the abductions aren't just happening in Chicago. They're happening in our suburbs. They're happening in places where families are simply trying to live their lives. On October 15th at 2:16 PM, I witnessed CBP agents barricade a vehicle at a gas station where three individuals were on their way to work but needed to pump gas before they would get there.

The three passengers were not harming anyone. They were simply on their way to work. The agents never presented a warrant and proceeded to smash the car window in front of me. And as you witness this lawlessness, it's very difficult for me as an advocate to challenge and to be brave enough to ask, "Where's the warrant?"

And so if I'm a naturalized citizen and I have my status and I'm still fearful of asking for these things when I see armed masked men, I can't imagine what it feels like for these individuals on a daily basis. And so on November 7th, we received reports of helicopters and a large presence of ICE throughout our communities, specifically heavily populated with immigrants in Waukegan.

I went to verify and I witnessed two men simply walking on the sidewalk while Brown, be picked up and shoved in an SUV. I captured the image of the SUV driving away as helicopters were hovering over us. We're not criminals. We're individuals coming into this country to work to build a better life, just as my parents brought me to this country to do the same.

On November 7th at 10:16 AM, I witnessed two men... The two men that I witnessed. I never was able to get their names. I don't know where they went. I was not able to notify their family members, so that always haunts me. On November 7th at 11:59, I witnessed a group of about 19 agents along with Gregory Bovino block a gentleman driving a truck that clearly looked like it was a construction vehicle. The agents questioned the man while in the vehicle and then released him. Clearly that individual was a citizen. After verifying that, I videotaped when the agent signaled me to approach them. Nineteen armed men signaling me to approach them. Was I going to approach, go towards them? Absolutely not. I was fearing for my own life.

> **This is the picture that his child is going to remember: a picture of armed masked men with guns.**
>
> **Carmen Patlan**

On November 7th at 11:02 AM, I witnessed approximately 19 agents stop at a BP gas station where Gregory Bovino and his agents were playing rock, paper, scissors and joking about where they were going to go next. A white van drove by and Gregory Bovino did the Hitler salute. And these individuals were all heavily armed, hands on the trigger of long armed weapons.

And so how do we respond as community advocates when we're witnessing such lawlessness? This morning I want to share that in Waukegan, there were six, as again, six vehicles, coming to ambush an individual. They picked him up this morning while in the car with his child. This is the picture that his child is going to remember: a picture of armed masked men with guns. And this is what our community is going through right now. And it's unacceptable. Last week we had six, again, agents, vehicles coming and taking four family members. So these family members are no longer with their parents. These children are no longer with their parents.

> **It is urgent that we don't forget that the families that are left behind are not left behind well. They're left behind traumatized, and they're left behind with great needs and also struggling without undocumented status. Something must be done.**
>
> **Carmen Patlan**

As you stated, how many thousands of children are now parentless? The story that never leaves my heart is a story of a young mom who was detained in October. She had a three-month-old and a three-year-old. That three-month-old, that three-year-old now have no mother. She was a single mother. What will those children do?

She was not prepared. She didn't have a guardianship. She didn't have a power of attorney for those children. What are they to do now? They don't have a passport. How will they be reunited with her now that she's already in Mexico? The gentlemen that they picked up in that gas station, they're already deported, and their families are broken and trying to find ways to survive.

They're taking breadwinners. These families are left with nothing. Our agencies are left to try to pick up the pieces and to try to advocate to support these individuals during these times of crisis. It is urgent that we don't forget that the families that are left behind are not left behind well. They're left behind traumatized, and they're left behind with great needs and also struggling without undocumented status. Something must be done. And I appreciate you giving me the time to share these stories. Thank you.

Sasha Reyes

Managing Lead of Advocacy and Community Engagement, Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project (FLAP)

> **In Illinois, we saw that we had the greatest increase in arrests by ICE, compared to all other states. We were 515% above the normal arrests, more than was occurring in any other state.**
>
> **Sasha Reyes, Managing Lead of Advocacy and Community Engagement, Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project**

Hi everyone. My name is Sasha Reyes. I'm the Managing Lead of Advocacy and Community Engagement here at the Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project (FLAP). We are a nonprofit that helps with workers' rights. We help immigrant workers with legal representation, help build their cases for litigation. We primarily serve the industries of farmworkers, snow plowing, as well as meat packing and meat processing plants. My role as the Managing Lead of Advocacy and Community Engagement includes going to advocate for legal organizations in order to be funded, as we know and see that it's very necessary for us to represent workers in various matters — criminal, civil, immigration. I also help support various campaigns, immigration

campaigns and workers' rights campaigns, as well as food supply chain campaigns. I also help the organization's advocacy in my role and support the organization's messaging and mission.

It's really important to highlight the stories of low-wage immigrant workers, especially because they are being exploited inside of their work place, and obviously all of the exploitation they are receiving outside of work as well. We need to highlight these stories in order to show how these workers are being deprived. Immigration enforcement is affecting lives in real ways and we need to improve accountability in other ways.

We have in Illinois the Court Access, Safety and Participation Act that is supposed to protect people who are going to court, leaving court, as well as inside and outside of courthouses. But we are seeing individuals being attacked, the law is not being upheld, and not being enforced, and it's being violated. And so, in Illinois, we saw that we had the greatest increase in arrests by ICE, compared to all other states. We were 515% above the normal arrests, more than was occurring in any other state.

And so, we only get to hear some of the stories that come to us, and we need to highlight them in order to enforce this law and, like you said, create accountability. It's impacting not only the workers, but the workers at FLAP as well. Our attorney, a 24 year-old lawyer, was taking his daughter to Rayito de Sol when he saw a bunch of ICE immigration officials outside the school. They were there, trespassing illegally. They ignored a private property sign that was right outside the door, and violently detained and arrested one of the infant school teachers. They dragged her outside of the school in front of the children, and the school was shut down for a week. This should not have happened.

So, I'm here to speak on these stories as well as the workers that were impacted by ICE and are being impacted now. Thank you.

> **They ignored a private property sign that was right outside the door, and violently detained and arrested one of the infant school teachers. They dragged her outside of the school in front of the children, and the school was shut down for a week.**
>
> **Sasha Reyes**

Hina Mahmood

Executive Director of the Illinois Accountability Commission

Good afternoon and thank you to the organizers of the People's Hearing for creating the space and continuing the work of documenting, examining, and responding to the harm experienced by communities during Operation Midway Blitz. My name is Hina Mahmood, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Illinois Accountability Commission. The Commission was created by Governor J.B. Pritzker through an executive order and housed within the Illinois Department of Human Rights. Our mandate was to investigate and document what federal law enforcement agents did during Operation Midway Blitz, examine how those actions impacted Illinois residents and communities, and recommend ways to prevent future harm.

Before I discuss the Commission's findings, I want to acknowledge the people who made this public record possible. To every person who testified before the Commission, participated in community listening sessions, submitted evidence, shared video, or entrusted us with their experience, thank you. Many people came forward while still carrying fear, trauma, uncertainty, and in some cases, real concerns about retaliation against themselves and their families. Some testified publicly, others shared their experience privately through community organizations, health care providers, legal advocates, educators, faith leaders, and listening sessions across Illinois. Their participation made it possible for the Commission to create a formal public record of what communities experienced during Operation Midway Blitz.

That matters because public memory is fragile and harm can be minimized, distorted or disputed away, unless people are willing to come forward and institutions are willing to preserve what occurred.

Over six months, the Commission conducted 16 in-depth investigations across the Chicagoland region, held five public hearings, and 70 community listening sessions across Illinois, and reviewed hundreds of hours of body-worn camera footage, surveillance, social media videos, law enforcement records, court filings, testimony from impacted residents, experts, advocates, educators, health providers, business owners, and public officials.

And what emerged from that work was clear. Operation Midway Blitz was not a series of disconnected incidents, or isolated mistakes. The Commission documented repeated patterns across Chicago and surrounding communities. Mass military-style law enforcement operations, dangerous vehicle pursuit, aggressive use of force, chemical agents deployed in residential neighborhoods, discriminatory stops, warrantless arrests, intimidation of observers and bystanders, surveillance of protest activity, and conditions of detention that deprived people of due process and basic dignity.

Federal officials repeatedly mischaracterized events, publicly concealed key facts, defended unlawful conduct, and encouraged increasingly aggressive tactics while shielding agents from accountability.

Hina Mahmood

At the Commission hearings, residents described masked agents jumping from unmarked vehicles into residential neighborhoods, deploying chemical agents near schools and public gatherings, and using force against bystanders and legal observers attempting to document what happened. These actions occurred at homes, workplaces, schools, hospitals, public streets, commercial corridors, and community gathering spaces. They were carried out through roving enforcement patrols that moved through neighborhoods and community spaces, creating an atmosphere of fear that extended far beyond those directly impacted.

The Commission also found these patterns were not simply operational failures on the ground. Federal officials repeatedly mischaracterized events, publicly concealed key facts, defended unlawful conduct, and encouraged increasingly aggressive tactics while shielding agents from accountability.

But what I think is the most important thing to emphasize today, I'd say, is the human impact of these actions, the record the Commission has built not only with findings and evidence, but with the lived experience of the people whose daily lives were fundamentally disrupted.

What follows is only a small set of examples drawn from hundreds of accounts the Commission received, each reflecting a broader pattern documented by testimony and evidence.

We heard from healthcare providers who describe families avoiding hospitals and delaying urgent medical care because they feared encountering federal agents in a clinic and emergency room. Dr. Minal Giri, MD, testified that when a parent is detained, a sick child's entire care plan collapses, medications go unfilled, transportation disappears, insurance coverage lapses.

At listening sessions, parents described telling their children goodbye every morning, not knowing whether they would safely return home. One participant in Franklin Park said, "When I go to work, I look out the window to sigh, then my shrug. When I go home with my children, I hope I come back." One participant told the Commission, "Before we went to the park, to church, to the library, to work; now the streets are empty."

These accounts were echoed across multiple listening sessions in different communities, where residents described broad changes in daily life and mobility. Educators described classrooms with empty seats for weeks at a time.



Public memory is fragile and harm can be minimized, distorted or disputed away, unless people are willing to come forward and institutions are willing to preserve what occurred.

Hina Mahmood, Executive Director, Illinois Accountability Commission

A teacher at Funston Elementary testified that the presence of federal agents near the school was "the most dangerous day that my students have ever faced at school." A school principal described dozens of students afraid to enter their school lunch program code because they believed ICE would somehow track them through it.

On 25th Street in Little Village and Chicago's economically vibrant corridor, businesses reported revenue losses comparable to or worse than COVID-19 pandemic. Restaurants were empty, street vendors disappeared, and workers stopped taking public transportation out of fear.

And throughout all of this, community organizations, schools, health care providers, faith leaders became informal first responders to fear and instability. They created emergency safety plans, delivered food and medicine directly to families, shifted operations online, and stepped into gaps left by institutions that people no longer trusted to protect them.

That broader erosion of trust was one of the Commission's most significant findings. Operation Midway Blitz did not simply affect immigration enforcement. It damaged people's willingness to engage with public institutions generally, including schools, hospitals, and local law enforcement. It weakened relationships that communities and local leaders had spent years trying to build. Its effects extended beyond direct encounters during rogue enforcement operations and shaped decision-making among U.S. citizens and local residents.

That broader erosion of trust was one of the Commission's most significant findings. Operation Midway Blitz did not simply affect immigration enforcement. It damaged people's willingness to engage with public institutions generally, including schools, hospitals, and local law enforcement.

Hina Mahmood

And that is why creating this public record matters. The commissioners said from the beginning that we did not have prosecutorial authority, and that we lacked many of the tools typically available to formal investigative bodies, including subpoena power. The documentation itself is still a form of accountability. This public record ensures that what communities experience cannot simply be erased, minimized, or rewritten. It creates factual and foundational evidence for advocates, attorneys, journalists, researchers, public officials, and bodies, to use themselves to continue the long work after the immediate political moment has passed.

It also ensures that individuals' experience, sorry, I'm almost done, that the documentation was never intended to be the end point. It was meant to be the foundation of what comes next.

And that is why this people's hearing matters, as they continue to work on bringing the public together to review the public record and public view, connecting individual, direct community testimony to the broader conversation about civil rights, democratic accountability, federal oversight, and the role of state and local communities of the federal system built to ensure accountability.

That model was imperfect, but it demonstrated that state and public institutions do not have to look away when communities come forward with credible allegations of abuse. They can document, they can preserve evidence, they can create public records, and they help lay the groundwork for future accountability.

State and public institutions do not have to look away when communities come forward with credible allegations of abuse. They can document, they can preserve evidence, they can create public records, and they help lay the groundwork for future accountability.

Hina Mahmood

And none of that was possible without the courage of the people who chose to speak, document, testify, and the support that helped community members be remembered. Thank you.

Rochelle Garza:

Thanks to all our panelists for sharing your testimony. We have a couple of minutes for questions. Do you want to start?

Marty Castro:

Sure. Ms. Mahmood, if I'm not mistaken, you're also engaged with the Illinois Human Rights Department. Could you tell us if you have seen, through the department's lens, whether all the activity surrounding immigration enforcement has created an uptick in other forms of discrimination that are reported to the department?

Hina Mahmood:

Gosh, I'm sorry. I can't speak to that.

Marty Castro:

Would you be able to gather that information and share it with us?

Hina Mahmood:

I'll gather that information and bring it back to you.

Marty Castro:

Great. Thank you

Rochelle Garza:

Well, thank you for being here today, all of you. The Accountability Commission that was created, we had the honor of meeting Judge Ruben Castillo earlier, who's the Chair of that Commission. What you all have done to preserve information is really critical, as you said in your testimony.

I'm curious as to maybe the economic impact that I think we haven't really heard much about, and we'll hear more later. You did mention some, but I was just curious if you would tease out some more information on that for us.

Hina Mahmood:

Yeah. We worked with Shantel Robinson to do interviews across the city where they were impacted by the raids, and she was able to talk to local businesses where she was able to gather both anecdotal and research around that. It is in our report, and I will be happy to share that with you.

Rochelle Garza:

Linda, can you speak to that...

Linda Tortolero:

Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Chair, for bringing that up. I think that question of obtaining that amount of data across all immigrant business corridors along Little Village and Pilsen are definitely needed. That was an important part of the testimony received by the Commission, but I think more needs to be done to shine a light, to really give us data that we need in a timely way and also talk about what kind of reparations may be needed to help affected businesses.



Audience members at People's Hearing in Chicago

Rochelle Garza:

Yes. And I would add that it goes to the point that you were making, Carmen, about the family impact. I know that there has been some limited reporting about what does it look like for a family when you lose the breadwinner. What does it look like for a family when you lose both parents?

So, I don't know if you have any more to add on that issue. It's an economic impact not just on the businesses, but on the family unit. And on the family unit, it spirals. It becomes even bigger.

Carmen Patlan:

I can tell you specifically the families that we're working with, but one in particular; his name is Guillermo.

Guillermo was detained on October 17th and was released in January and was told he had to come to court a month later. He now has to leave on June 3rd. And so, Guillermo has a home that he now has to sell or that he now has to figure out what to do with. He has vehicles. He had a business. His wife had a business. All of those are now crumbling. And he has a daughter who just graduated from college and another daughter who is underage, and so they have to scramble and figure out what to do. Mom and dad are both undocumented. This family unit has been completely collapsed. So who do they turn to?

Guillermo has a home that he now has to sell or that he now has to figure out what to do with. He has vehicles. He had a business. His wife had a business. All of those are now crumbling.

Carmen Patlan

There are very few organizations out there that are able to support, financially, an undocumented individual. FLAP can do a certain amount, but they can't do everything, and not one organization can be all things to all people. And when the government is choking our community, especially our undocumented communities, with less and less resources, these individuals are left to do what?

And so that's the part that we struggle with on a daily basis, how do we continue to help these families, who are in this deep struggle? Those two little girls that I mentioned, who's giving them milk? Who's giving them diapers? Who's giving them the clothing on their backs? Who's taking them to doctors if the grandparents are also undocumented?

This is the tragedy that we're seeing with the aftermath. Not only is their loved one gone, probably these families are not ever going to be able to see them unless they auto-deport themselves and leave. And so they're left with the broken pieces. A lot of our families don't have access to mental health services because they're afraid to go out and seek it.

Every day that I get a message that now there's another ICE agent, I start feeling the same feeling again. And someone who is like me, previously undocumented, I feel like I walk around with a target on my back just because I look the way that I look.

Carmen Patlan

And so, like I said, children are witnessing these issues happen right in front of them. These are US-born children. What's the aftermath with that? It's a vicious cycle and, and we're witnessing it firsthand. And we don't talk about the trauma that we experience as well as providers, and I want to highlight that as well.

Every day that I get a message that now there's another ICE agent, I start feeling the same feeling again. And someone who is like me, previously undocumented, I feel like I walk around with a target on my back just because I look the way that I look.

And so this is what we deal with on a day-to-day basis. But yes, our families are struggling very much with the financial collapse of their households.

Sasha Reyes:

Yeah. So, FLAP was one of the organizations that was able to provide $250 of financial assistance to these families. We provide them with Aldi gift cards.

As said, we also struggle with the aftermath. There's many people who come to us, call us, and they've been detained. For three months, we had this one person who was detained. He experienced horrible conditions within the detention center, and when he came to us, he was very thankful. He sent us a picture of the food that he bought with the Aldi gift card. But he was behind on rent bills, and he told us that he lost his will to live. We try to help him as much as we can, but the industries that we serve are very vulnerable. We encounter many landscapers who are working outside their homes, and they are taken by ICE, and people don't have any way of knowing that information.

> **During the pandemic, we were able to give much more money to people who were experiencing a crisis in rent. We hope we can do that again.**
>
> Sasha Reyes

For example, we met someone who was able to locate them because a video was shared on social media. And so we're doing the best that we can, and we definitely need more resources at the organization so that we can provide more to these families in more ways.

During the pandemic, we were able to give much more money to people who were experiencing a crisis in rent. We hope we can do that again.

Carmen Patlan:

One more thing is that legal representation is almost unattainable for these individuals. And so they risk not having an opportunity, even if they might have a pathway to be able to stay, because they can't afford legal representation and organizations like ours that provide some sort of relief in this aspect are also now being challenged with the DOJ not approving accreditation for nonprofits like ours.

And so that's another barrier for these individuals who can't make ends meet; they certainly are not going to be able to afford representation. Thank you.

> **One more thing is that legal representation is almost unattainable for these individuals. And so they risk not having an opportunity, even if they might have a pathway to be able to stay, because they can't afford legal representation and organizations like ours that provide some sort of relief in this aspect are also now being challenged with the DOJ not approving accreditation for nonprofits like ours.**
>
> Carmen Patlan

Rochelle Garza:

Well, thank you again to each of you for your time, for your testimony, for putting a finer point on these issues for us. We're going to transition to the next panel. Again, thank you. I appreciate you being here.



From Left to Right: Lisa Wright, Director of Government Affairs and Advocacy, Chinese American Service League (CASL); Sheila Bedi, Chief Strategy Officer, Counsel, Office of the Mayor; Venu Gupta, Executive Director, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights; Jennifer Crespo, Co-Chair, Community Outreach and former President, Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois (HLAI)

PANEL 2

Ongoing Enforcement in Chicago, What Is Still Happening

Marty Castro:

We will now begin with panel two. Thank you. This panel will be about ongoing enforcement, what is still happening. The panel's going to examine current immigration enforcement practices in Chicago and the civil rights concerns that are being raised by community members, including the enforcement methods that are clear as day, as well as methods that are less visible or commonly known.

Each panelist will have six minutes to present their testimony. Our witnesses will be Jennifer Crespo from the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois, Venu Gupta from the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, Sheila Bedi with the City of Chicago, and Lisa Wright from the Chinese American Service League.

Again, you'll have six minutes, and we'll begin now. Ms. Crespo.

Jennifer Crespo

Co-Chair, Community Outreach and former President, Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois (HLAI)

Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to contribute to this important effort. My name is Jennifer Lydia Crespo. I am the daughter of immigrants from the Philippines and Puerto Rico. I am a past president of HLAI, serving the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois, where I continue to serve as a floor director and Co-Chair of the Community Outreach Committee with Cindy Medina-Cervantes. HLAI is a community of lawyers committed to promoting and supporting the advancement of Latinos in the legal profession, and advocating for justice and fairness.

We value community engagement and justice. Our values and beliefs inspired the origins of the HLAI Rapid Response Network, which has grown under our current leader, Julio A. Costa, to a collection of attorneys

from diverse backgrounds and practice areas who have united to strategically and rapidly respond to the urgent legal needs of our community.

The HLAI Rapid Response is unique from other rapid response teams because its composition includes only lawyers and those actively pursuing their Juris Doctors. This is crucial because it means we are all officers of the court. According to our model rules of conduct, and the oaths we all took, we are public citizens responsible for the quality of justice in our communities.

With firsthand experience with getting tear-gassed and gaslit by federal agents, I know federal enforcement practices have changed from those used during Operation Midway Blitz.

But just because we are not experiencing entire neighborhoods getting occupied and tear-gassed by dozens of armed federal agents does not mean that the rule of law is being followed or that we are safe.

The HLAI continues to respond to reports of arbitrary arrests; abductions near courthouses; intimidation and coercion; clients being denied access to their lawyers, families and medication; prolonged detention without adequate food, hygiene and space; and violations of court orders for relief, including release. Those abuses are happening today, and they are contrary to the rule of law, and they frustrate access to justice.

But the HLAI Rapid Response Network is vigilant and we continue serving as public servants through community organizing, nonviolent rapid response, exercising our constitutional right in line with our duties as lawyers, providing volunteer immigration, civil rights, criminal defense, and family planning legal services, Those efforts also include: meeting regularly to check in with and update our rapid responders and rapid response lawyers throughout Illinois and across the country. They include studying recent developments in case law and teaching one another through continuing legal education. They include augmenting the efforts of grassroots community partners and bringing our lawyers to them, to their churches, their schools, hospitals, and storefronts.

We continue to practice the nonviolent rapid response techniques we demonstrated in Brighton Park, Little Village, and Hawkins Estate, including de-escalation, helping victims seek medical attention and legal aid, preventing harm, upholding dignity, and practicing confidentiality.

We encourage by example; we exercise our rights to speech and assembly; we document and preserve evidence from public spaces; we coordinate with legal organizations and bar associations; we provide know your rights information and presentations; we donate legal services to prepare habeas petitions seeking release from unlawful arrest and prolonged detention that are being used to coerce people into self-deporting or giving up other rights; and we serve as declarantes (witnesses) in lawsuits challenging the enforcement tactics we ourselves witnessed and suffered, as I did as the main plaintiff in the Chicago litigation.

I am not here in my work capacity, I am not here speaking on behalf of the state of Illinois, but I know from my experience as a lawyer litigating fraud cases and investigating police torture that accountability matters, that the truth is paramount, and that justice delayed is justice denied. Democracy has always required constant vigilance, and lawyers and public citizens must continue to stand guard and readily meet the calls for civil rights and human dignity today. Thank you.

The HLAI continues to respond to reports of arbitrary arrests; abductions near courthouses; intimidation and coercion; clients being denied access to their lawyers, families and medication; prolonged detention without adequate food, hygiene and space; and violations of court orders for relief, including release. Those abuses are happening today, and they are contrary to the rule of law, and they frustrate access to justice.

Jennifer Crespo, Co-Chair, Community Outreach and former President, Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois (HLAI)

Venu Gupta

Executive Director, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights

Good afternoon community. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Venu Gupta, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. We are civil rights lawyers and advocates working to secure racial equity and economic opportunity for all since 1969.

We provide legal representation through partnerships with the private bar, and we collaborate with grassroots organizations and other advocacy groups to advance civil rights.

For the last 17 months, we have seen an unprecedented militarization of our city and harmful immigration raids and enforcement tactics that continue to have enduring impacts on our neighbors and communities. Chicago Lawyers' Committee joined many partners in the nonprofit, philanthropy, and public service sectors to denounce these enforcement practices that are tearing families apart and threatening the civil rights, public safety, and economic stability of our city. Although we have seen enforcement shift from high-profile assaults to more targeted and often intentionally difficult-to-document tactics like traffic stops and courthouse arrests, these attacks are no less harmful and carry serious civil rights violations.

For the last 17 months, we have seen an unprecedented militarization of our city and harmful immigration raids and enforcement tactics that continue to have enduring impacts on our neighbors and communities.

Venu Gupta, Executive Director,
Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights

Communities were already facing increased risk of racial profiling, and now with more low-profile enforcement tactics taking place, people are at risk of abuse and due process violations. Accountability becomes significantly more difficult without the ability to document these harmful practices, and that likely is the point.

Often, neighbors have relied on community-based response networks for documentation and resources. Under this current administration, we are seeing a significant reinterpretation and, at times, disregard of our nation's laws. The U.S. Constitution guarantees due process as a fundamental right to all people in our country. Both citizens and non-citizens alike have a right to due process.

However, we have seen people's right to due process violated through rapid removal processes, limited access to legal aid, and detention without hearings, all making it almost impossible for individuals to have their fair chance at their day in court. Again, this should be alarming to every single person in this country.

The undermining of anyone's rights is a threat to us all, and when rights only exist on paper, but in practice, people are denied the ability to assert their rights, this effectively makes those protections meaningless. This is why community defense has been so critical. We are deeply grateful for the leadership of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, whose rapid response networks have become an essential frontline defense for immigrant communities. Through hotlines, community alerts, know your rights trainings, and coordinated response systems, ICIRR has mobilized our communities to remain vigilant, document enforcement activity, and provide support for families facing deportation.

Accountability becomes significantly more difficult without the ability to document these harmful practices, and that likely is the point.

Venu Gupta

Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights also partnered with ICIRR through our non-partisan election protection program, to protect voter access as looming threats of potential federal overreach and enforcement persisted leading up to the Illinois primary election and, of course, ahead of the midterm elections later this year.

We cannot solely place the burden of defending civil rights and upholding civil society on impacted families and volunteer-based systems. The responsibility must also rest with elected officials, government agencies, lawyers, and those in power to effectuate more meaningful oversight and intervention structures to uphold the rule of law and hold back bad actors accountable for violating fundamental civil rights before irreparable harm occurs.

> **The undermining of anyone's rights is a threat to us all, and when rights only exist on paper, but in practice, people are denied the ability to assert their rights, this effectively makes those protections meaningless.**
>
> **Venu Gupta**

When families stop leaving their homes for necessary appointments, stop going to work, and students miss school out of fear, people become less likely to call the police for help, attend healthcare appointments, or engage in civic life. When eligible voters choose not to vote out of fear of federal enforcement or intimidation or potential racial profiling, the impact extends even further to fair representation, voter access, and the ability to be heard in our democracy.

All of this threatens the safety, public health, and frankly, viability of our neighborhoods, our city, and the future of our country. If we are going to live up to the promise of America, we must protect the civil rights of every neighbor because it is morally right and because our democracy, our legal system, and our future depend on it. Thank you.

Sheila Bedi

Chief Strategy Officer, Counsel, Office of the Mayor

My name is Sheila Bedi, and I serve as Chief Strategy Officer in the Office of the Mayor, and I'm also Counsel to the Mayor. And before entering city government, I spent over two decades working on issues of state violence, particularly around police misconduct.

In other words, my experience was really focused on what happens when government acts with impunity, without transparency, and how such government actors can be held accountable. As a result of that experience, Mayor Brandon Johnson asked me to join his administration to help develop strategies to respond to harms emanating from the federal government.

And many of those harms relate to the militarized immigration enforcement, but there are other harms as well in terms of what's happening with the federal budget and cuts to public benefits. All of these harms are coming together to create incredible pressure on our communities. The harms of Midway Blitz, as you've heard, have been well documented, but those harms did not disappear when the majority of troops left town.

> **Families have been ripped apart. School children have missed days and days of instruction. People with chronic illness have opted out of receiving medical care. And businesses have suffered economic harm that rivals what occurred during the COVID pandemic.**
>
> **Sheila Bedi, Chief Strategy Officer, Counsel, Office of the Mayor**

Now, many of these harms are almost impossible to quantify. Families have been ripped apart. School children have missed days and days of instruction. People with chronic illness have opted out of receiving medical care. And as you heard, in some corners of the city, businesses have suffered economic harm that rivals what occurred during the COVID pandemic.

There's also the harm of the collective trauma of our communities witnessing state violence happening right outside their homes on our city streets. It's important to note that immigration enforcement, enhanced immigration enforcement in the city of Chicago, has not stopped. Just this morning, we had to deal with immigration enforcement outside of our domestic violence courts. Federal agents were waiting outside of domestic violence courts to engage in immigration enforcement.

> **It was important to have a very strong statement at the beginning that the Chicago Police Department would maintain its commitment to being a sanctuary city, and that the Chicago Police Department would maintain local control, would stay under local control.**
>
> **Sheila Bedi**

So the harm hasn't stopped. The enforcement has not stopped. And as I mentioned, this is compounded by the other harms that are coming from the federal government, including the fact that tens of thousands of Chicagoans are about to be removed from SNAP, are going to be food insecure as a result of what's happening at the federal government, including, as we heard, harms to the democratic process and threats to the midterms All of these harms are why Mayor Brandon Johnson has taken a series of actions that were intended to clarify protections, to preserve accountability, and to ensure that Chicago residents understand both their rights and the city's responsibilities.

The first thing that the Mayor did once, President Trump, quite literally in an X post, declared war on the city of Chicago, was establish the Protecting Chicago Initiative. And this executive order helped to ensure that city departments were coordinated and prepared when federal action caused so much harm in our city streets.

The Mayor's order was about maintaining constitutional guardrails and ensuring that city agencies acted lawfully and tried as much as they could to prevent the chaos and harm that destabilized our neighborhoods. The other thing this order did was to make sure, to make clear, that the Chicago Police Department would remain under the control of the Mayor and reaffirm the city's commitment to remaining a sanctuary city.

This was incredibly important because, as I know you'll all remember, Midway Blitz began in the wake of what happened in Washington, DC, and where the federal government essentially took over the police department. Now, the federal government was able to do that in DC because of the unique relationship that DC has with the federal government.



Audience members at People's Hearing in Chicago

The second significant executive order that Mayor Johnson signed has been referred to as the Ice-Free Zone order. And this order made clear that city property would not be used to facilitate federal immigration raids. And this matters because government participation in this kind of harm, even if it's passive, confers legitimacy.

Sheila Bedi

But there was significant concern in our community that the same thing would happen here, and that we wouldn't just have federal agents engaging in harm, but that the Chicago Police Department would be assisting them. So it was important to have a very strong statement at the beginning that the Chicago Police Department would maintain its commitment to being a sanctuary city, and that the Chicago Police Department would maintain local control, would stay under local control.

That order also required that Chicago Police Department officers stay in uniform so that our residents would be able to distinguish between federal officers and Chicago Police Department officers. As a result of that order, the city also provided significant resources in terms of Know Your Rights materials in coordination with many of our community partners, including ICIRR.

The second significant executive order that Mayor Johnson signed has been referred to as the Ice-Free Zone order. And this order made clear that city property would not be used to facilitate federal immigration raids. And this matters because government participation in this kind of harm, even if it's passive, confers legitimacy.

And Mayor Johnson drew a firm line that the city of Chicago would not lend its infrastructure to terrorize our residents. This was the city exercising its lawful authority over its own resources and refusing complicity and harm. I'm happy to discuss in Q&A how effective that's been and the lessons we've learned from that order.

The Mayor also signed executive orders that focused on fiscal responsibility and transparency, because this initiative that came from the federal government imposed such significant harm on city resources. And there have been so many cuts from the federal government to the city's budget, it has affected how the city can show up.

Those initiatives focused on operational reviews prohibiting the sale of city-owned medical debt. And again, this is recognizing that the harm from the federal government created both physical harm, emotional harm, and economic harm and because of that, the city has had to look at multiple strategies to try to resolve those issues.

Finally, the last executive order that the Mayor signed related to militarized immigration enforcement required the Chicago Police Department to document alleged misconduct involving federal immigration enforcement. And this has been known as the ICE On Notice executive order. And the documentation piece, as you've heard and as you are engaged in here, is critically important.

In moments like this, accountability depends on whether a record exists at all; if injuries occur, they have to be documented. If force is used, it has to be preserved. Body-worn camera, again, it has to be maintained. And CPD's existing policies were unclear in terms of maintaining that camera when a CPD officer was perhaps on the scene but not actually engaged in any kind of enforcement activity.

In moments like this, accountability depends on whether a record exists at all; if injuries occur, they have to be documented. If force is used, it has to be preserved. Body-worn camera, again, it has to be maintained.

Sheila Bedi



From Left to Right: Lisa Wright, Director of Government Affairs and Advocacy, Chinese American Service League (CASL); Sheila Bedi, Chief Strategy Officer, Counsel, Office of the Mayor

So too often in this country, the communities that are most affected by state violence are told that it can't be proven and therefore nothing can happen and the City of Chicago was refusing to accept that dynamic as inevitable with regards to what happened, what we saw during Midway Blitz.

So these executive orders have had an incredible impact, and that was, of course, because of the Mayor's leadership, but it was also because of the deep community-based partnerships and the lessons that we learned from organizations like ICIRR and our other partners that are here at the table today.

Well, one of the other learnings that we had is that during these kinds of harm, one of the most important things that we can do is to provide people with clarity. So I'll wrap up, and I'll just note that, as I said in the beginning, we know that this is not over, that the harm that the federal government is imposing, immigration enforcement is still happening.

The threats to democracy are real. Chicago's going to continue to stand up for our communities.

Lisa Wright

Director of Government Affairs and Advocacy, Chinese American Service League (CASL)

Good afternoon. I'm Lisa Wright, Director of Government Affairs and Advocacy with CASL, the Chinese American Service League. We're the largest social services nonprofit serving the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities in the Midwest.

For about 50 years, we have served thousands of Chicago area residents across health, human services, education, and legal advocacy, and with deep roots in Chinatown, Bridgeport, and Armour Square. I'm here today to speak about how

> **Some families were caught off guard because they believed enforcement wouldn't touch them, that following the rules, having documentation, staying quiet would keep them safe. But that is false. Nationally, ICE arrests of Asians increased five and a half times compared to the previous administration.**
>
> Lisa Wright, Director of Government Affairs and Advocacy, Chinese American Service League (CASL)

I also want to raise profound concerns about how ongoing immigration practices are re-traumatizing survivors of domestic violence and preventing them from accessing life-saving services ... Their visas are also dependent on their abusive spouse's legal status. So current immigration practices are trapping DV survivors in cycles of violence and isolation, limiting their voice.

Lisa Wright

Operation Midway Blitz and ongoing immigration enforcements are hitting Asian immigrant families, and why the harm is larger than the numbers suggest.

This operation was a rupture in our community. Some families were caught off guard because they believed enforcement wouldn't touch them, that following the rules, having documentation, staying quiet would keep them safe. But that is false. Nationally, ICE arrests of Asians increased five and a half times compared to the previous administration.

It peaked in December 2025 at nearly 1,400 arrests in one month. Nearly half of those arrested have no criminal record. Chinese and Indian nationals account for the largest share of Asian arrests, around 25% each, followed by Vietnamese nationals at 12%. One in four ICE detainee deaths under this administration have been Asian.

Locally, community members have been detained blocks from schools, steps from their front doors without warrants. In one case our council worked on, a father of two was taken just outside his home in Bridgeport near Robert Healy Elementary School. No warrant was shown. His wife was at work. He was transferred to a detention facility in Michigan in less than 48 hours. His children are still here, separated.

In addition, the poor treatment of detained community members is an ongoing issue. Last year, a man was detained in Chinatown by ICE, and he had recently undergone heart surgery when he was taken. While in detention in Indiana, there were serious concerns about delays in receiving proper medical attention and medication following his surgery. CASL provided translation support between the detention facility and the individual to help address these medical issues. But it took the detention facility four weeks to get him medication. During those four weeks, the man begged our attorney to just deport him. He couldn't stand it. The pain was too great.

I also want to raise profound concerns about how ongoing immigration practices are re-traumatizing survivors of domestic violence and preventing them from accessing life-saving services. Survivors and victims of domestic violence have contacted CASL saying they're too afraid to come in for counseling, for legal services, or other support, saying that they scared that they're going to be taken or they'll be separated from their children or family. Their visas are also dependent on their abusive spouse's legal status. So current immigration practices are trapping DV survivors in cycles of violence and isolation, limiting their voice.

I need the panel and people here to understand why the Asian community tends to not come forward as silence is a harm multiplier. For many Asian immigrant families, speaking publicly about an enforcement action carries shame. It conflicts with deeply held cultural values around discretion, privacy, harmony, and not to disrupt that harmony and not draw attention to the family. Speaking out also risks exposing other family members. Language is another barrier to speaking out or coming forward. Many community members cannot navigate the legal systems, contact media or even community hotlines without Mandarin or Cantonese translation.

When outreach doesn't reach people in their language or through people they trust, they appear silent. But silence does not mean consent. It does not mean it's not happening to us.

When people don't report or don't ask for help, several things happen. They lose access to legal counsel at the most critical window. They can't be connected to translation services or emergency support. They can't be counted accurately. The true scale of enforcement in the Asian community stays hidden in the data. They can't protect each other. So the fear is real, and it's tangible in the community, and it continues. Foot traffic in many of our immigrant communities has dropped.

> **When outreach doesn't reach people in their language or through people they trust, they appear silent. But silence does not mean consent. It does not mean it's not happening to us.**
>
> **Lisa Wright**

Businesses are impacted. Parents question whether to send their kids to school to learn. Employees started carrying documentation just to get to work safely. CASL employees have shared that they're carrying copies of their passports. I personally carry a copy of my U.S. passport. This is not normal, and this is not what America stands for. Thank you.

Marty Castro:

Thank you all. We now have a few minutes for questions. Ms. Bedi, you talked about the various executive orders that Mayor Johnson has issued and that Mayor Johnson remains in control of the police. One of the things that has been stated in the litigation to appoint a special prosecutor is that there's allegedly been no referrals for prosecution.

So if you or if the city police are directed to document, what are they doing with that data? Is it being referred to the Cook County state's attorney or for prosecution? And secondly, if the city police are under the Mayor's control, why would he not direct or could he direct them to arrest ICE agents who violate laws in Chicago?

Sheila Bedi:

I appreciate the questions. And I'll say, you know, at this moment, I don't know what's happened in terms of referrals. I would be happy to get that information, and report it back. The reason why the Mayor signed the executive order that was signed in terms of ICE on notice was because there was a lot of, frankly,



Audience members at People's Hearing in Chicago

misinformation around the authority of the local police department and the local prosecutor with regards to the federal government.

And the Mayor's intent was to provide some very clear direction that this information should be documented, and that referrals to the prosecutor should happen when they are warranted and that local prosecutors do have the authority to prosecute federal officials for violations of local and state law under certain circumstances.

And so that was the intent of that executive order, and we are still in the process of implementing it. Ensuring that local law enforcement understand that that is an imperative has been a challenge, and I'll be forthright about that.

Marty Castro:

Could you elaborate on that?

Sheila Bedi:

Well, I mean, the city of Chicago is the third-largest city in the country, and there are a number of public safety challenges at any given moment. And some of the challenges around how to respond to federal government were about some of the relationships that local law enforcement has with federal government.

Some of them were around just the distribution of public safety resources, and some of them were around the very complex issues in terms of the interplay of federal law and local law. You know, this is unprecedented, and there is no playbook for a city or a local law enforcement to respond to this kind of situation.

But what we've heard very clearly is that our residents want to see the local criminal legal system operate to hold accountable these federal agents who so clearly violated the law. And that is what we are continuing to work on.

But what we've heard very clearly is that our residents want to see the local criminal legal system operate to hold accountable these federal agents who so clearly violated the law.

Sheila Bedi

Rochelle Garza:

And I think that's really critical. I may have said this earlier, I may not have, but, you know, I'm a Texan. And, unfortunately, in Texas, we see a lot of collaboration between ICE and city policing. And you all have the benefit of not having the state also forcing that and forcing your hand by controlling your purse strings.

So, I'm glad that you touched on it. I think that it's an opportunity for you all as a state to set what it looks like, set the example for the rest of the country and sort of what we want to be in states like Texas when it comes to that kind of collaboration. Because I think what underlies, I would say, all of your testimony is this belief in institutions, this belief in policing as being able to, you know, at times answer for somebody who is experiencing domestic violence, right?

They don't want to be afraid to call the police when they need help, or they don't want the barrier of, oh, this person doesn't speak the language that I speak, and I can't access these services. So, I just wanted to note that. I did want to bring something up because in Minnesota, we heard a lot about the intimidation of

constitutional observers and folks that were participating in rapid response being followed by undercover ICE agents, being parked in front of their homes, and their kids are scared in their own homes.

I'm curious, is that something that happened here? Is it something that you all have noted either personally or within your networks or have represented individuals that have gone through this? I am curious if somebody would elaborate on that.

Jennifer Crespo:

I can touch on that. Briefly, the HLAI Rapid Response Network is full of people who wake up, they look at themselves in the mirror and ask the question, "Am I going to put myself at risk today for my fellow neighbors, for my fellow attorneys, my fellow public citizens?" And we have unequivocally answered yes, but it has come with having to do a risk assessment.

Our members have been followed home by federal agents. They have been confronted by federal agents. Most of us have a retainer agreement with attorneys in the event we ourselves get detained and arrested. We have our own plan Bs in place should that happen. So it absolutely happened to us. What I've noticed our community do in terms of this public citizen network of lawyers is we tend to put our needs after those of others.

So it's going to be incumbent upon all of us as well to make sure that we're taking care of each other, that we are keeping each other safe as well. We have emergency contact numbers that we share with our people so that we have somebody to find anyone before they go missing, but I can say, without a doubt, as somebody who has put my hands up when federal agents pointed a gun at me, that it's most definitely happened here.

And the best thing that we can do is prepare for the worst case scenario, which is potentially getting arrested.

Our members have been followed home by federal agents. They have been confronted by federal agents. Most of us have a retainer agreement with attorneys in the event we ourselves get detained and arrested.

Jennifer Crespo

Sheila Bedi:

I also just want to say thank you to HLAI for their tremendous work. We have not encountered that yet. We thought we might during the Illinois primaries. We are preparing for intimidation of voters and poll observers for the midterms.

Marty Castro:

Ms. Crespo, as someone who was shot with a rubber bullet and tear gassed for peacefully protesting, I understand where you're coming from.

What sorts of things has HLAI or any of the organizations done to prepare protesters to ensure that, one, they're protected, but also that they are peacefully protesting and not crossing any lines? The reason I ask that is, there was a time when the state police were out at Broadview, and some of us believe that they might be doing more than just protecting the public, but engaging and assisting ICE, and we were told that they were there because there were protesters that were real agitators. Have you ever seen any kind of agitation among peaceful protesters in any of the documentation that you all have been gathering through your HLAI rapid response?



An ICE officer in a Lenox BearCat vehicle points his weapon at protesters in the Brighton Park neighborhood of Chicago on Saturday, October 4, 2025, following the U.S. Border Patrol shooting of Marimar Martinez. ©Anthony Vazquez/Chicago Sun-Times via AP

Jennifer Crespo:

I will first say that I will never forget Brighton Park, walking up to something I had never thought I would see in the United States: a vehicle that resembled a tank with somebody sitting out of it pointing a weapon.

I mean, agents with just guns slung around. My colleagues with pepper pellet residue all over them, foaming at the mouth from the treatment that they had received. And we are there urging everybody to stay calm, but it would be a lie to say that calm is the immediate reaction when people are getting shot at.

I will never forget Brighton Park, walking up to something I had never thought I would see in the United States: a vehicle that resembled a tank with somebody sitting out of it pointing a weapon.

Jennifer Crespo

Brighton Park happened because somebody had been almost killed just sitting in their vehicle. A federal agent shot several rounds in, right into them. So people are angry, people are scared, people are upset, and not everybody is going in there with the mentality of we need to de-escalate, document, and observe.

But that's when lawyers, that's when public citizens, that's when people who have been trained become really important. As I mentioned, we train one another with continuing legal education. We would meet with ICIRR to share materials and information. It is just all about, corroborating one another, being there for one another, and more than anything, just staying calm.

And it's one of the more difficult things that I've had to learn on the spot, hugging somebody is a great way to de-escalate, something I learned, you know, right then and there, but that's, that's what it takes. It takes everybody to just believe that they are a little bit braver than they might think they are.

And not everybody's going to be showing up with the same mission, but that's why we need to make sure we show up together, and that if you have a megaphone, what you're saying into that is, you know, "Be calm. Get off the streets. We don't want people getting run over," and that is just our role.

That is our role as public citizens, as lawyers, as servants of the United States.

Marty Castro:

Thank you. Thank you all for being here this afternoon. We will now take a 20-minute break. There'll be some lunch served out there, so feel free to grab something to eat. And then we'll reconvene in 20 minutes for panel 3A. Thank you.



From Left to Right: Nubia Willman, Former Chief Programs Officer at Latinos Progresando and Fasika Alem, Programs Director, United African Organization (UAO)

PANEL 3A

Community-Wide Disruption from Immigration Enforcement

Rochelle Garza:

All right. Thank you all so much for joining us today. We're going to go ahead and get started.

We are transitioning to the next panel. It is focused on community-wide disruption from immigration enforcement. This portion of the hearing centers on the stories of workforce disruptions, business losses, economic impacts because of federal enforcement, and impact school activity and community life.

These testimonies will provide a clearer picture of how policies and enforcement practices have affected and continue to impact all aspects of the community at large.

Again, panelists, you have six minutes each. Please adhere to the time constraints; we are running a tad behind. But I'm going to go ahead and start with introducing our panelists: Fasika Alem from the United African Organization, thank you for being here. Nubia Willman from Latinos Progresando. Amina Barumi from the Muslim Civic Coalition. Jennifer Aguilar from Little Village Chamber of Commerce. And we're going to go ahead and start with you, Ms. Alem.

Fasika Alem

Programs Director, United African Organization (UAO)

Good afternoon. Again, my name is Fasika Alem. I currently serve as the Programs Director with the United African Organization. At UAO, we work every day to promote social and economic justice, civic participation and empowerment among Black immigrants or refugees in Illinois. Whether it's through legal services, access to safety net programs, housing assistance, workforce development, or language access support, we help families navigate systems that are often not designed with us in mind.

> **What we are witnessing in our communities today is nothing short of sheer terror, families too afraid to go to work, take their children to school, or even go to buy groceries to feed their children.**
>
> **Fasika Alem, Programs Director, United African Organization (UAO)**

Today, Black immigrants represent one in ten Black people in the United States. Black immigrant communities in the Chicago region represent a rich plurality of languages, racial and ethnic identity, cultural practices, and lived experiences.

Chicago is home to an extraordinarily diverse population of Black immigrants and refugees hailing from more than 50 African countries, as well as Caribbean countries like Haiti and Jamaica and Central and Latin American countries like Belize and Colombia. In fact, 10% of all Black immigrants in the U.S. actually also self-identify as Latino. Thank you for the invitation to join you here today and to share the impact of immigration enforcement on our communities.

What we are witnessing in our communities today is nothing short of sheer terror, marked by fear, uncertainty, and profound distress among families and individuals navigating heightened immigration enforcement and ongoing instability. Families are too afraid to step outside their homes, too afraid to go to work, take their children to school, and even go to buy groceries to feed their families. In our offices, we have seen a significant decline in families seeking services to the tune of about an average of 60% in decline.

We're seeing hardworking mothers and fathers torn from their children and disappeared. In some cases, families are not aware of what has even happened to their loved ones, and we are often the ones that inform them after checking the ICE detainee locator that their family members have been detained.

We're seeing asylum seekers who are following the rules, attending court hearings, and complying with ICE check-ins, only to be detained, denied due process, and transferred thousands of miles away from their families. It's not lost on those of us here, that Black immigrants positioned at the intersection of race and immigration status face compounded forms of exclusion.

Although Black immigrants represent only about 5% of the undocumented population, they have historically accounted for more than 20% of those deported on criminal grounds. In this moment of escalating immigration enforcement, these disparities are only becoming more pronounced.

Uncertainty and rapidly changing policies around Temporary Protected Status for people from countries like Haiti, Ethiopia, and Sudan have also deeply destabilized Black immigrant communities across Chicago. The prolonged legal limbo has led to severe economic and emotional hardships, widespread housing and food insecurity, and the constant threat of family separation for hundreds of people.

Black immigrants also face continued challenges in their asylum proceedings. For example, for people from Mauritania, a country where Black Mauritanians face enduring impacts of slavery currently, racial discrimination, and state violence, their asylum approval rates are just about 30%.

Legal representation, as we know, can mean the difference between a family staying together and being separated. Earlier this year, we also saw Somali asylum seekers in Chicago being subjected to a coordinated fast-tracked immigration court docket that accelerated final hearings, severely restricting access to legal counsel and undermining due process.

Even beyond the courtroom, Black immigrants continue to encounter structural barriers to accessing support. In our direct service this includes, I want to say access to information and legal services, but also language access.

> **It's not lost on those of us here, that Black immigrants positioned at the intersection of race and immigration status face compounded forms of exclusion.**
>
> **Fasika Alem**

In our direct service work, only about a fifth of those we serve pick English as their preferred language. Languages such as French, Wolof, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Arabic are among the primary languages spoken by most recently arriving community members. We know that when language access is not a barrier, people are better able to express themselves, to fully understand their rights, and make informed decisions about their future.

> **Legal representation, as we know, can mean the difference between a family staying together and being separated. Earlier this year, we also saw Somali asylum seekers in Chicago being subjected to a coordinated fast-tracked immigration court docket that accelerated final hearings, severely restricting access to legal counsel and undermining due process.**
>
> **Fasika Alem**

Recent immigration enforcement actions have also affected those of us who provide support to immigration immigrant communities, creating heightened fear, uncertainty, and strain among service providers, advocates, and community leaders.

However, in closing, I want to share, since I'm running out of time, despite these harmful narratives and aggressive federal raids and enforcement tactics, what we have seen in Chicago is growing solidarity and organizing across communities among African Americans, Latinos, and immigrant communities who recognize these sweeping actions as a collective threat to civil rights and human dignity.

This shared response reflects a deepening commitment to mutual protection, advocacy, and collective action, and it is this solidarity that should give us both hope and the fortitude to continue to fight back. Thank you.

Nubia Willman

Former Chief Programs Officer, Latinos Progresando

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Nubia Batista Willman, and I serve as the Chief Programs Officer at Latinos Progresando. I'm also an attorney licensed in Illinois for over 15 years, specializing in immigration law. Latinos Progresando is a 28-year-old nonprofit, and we work alongside residents of Little Village, Marshall Square, South Lawndale, where we provide immigration legal services, family support, and community education.

The community we serve is one of the largest Mexican and Latino communities in the Midwest that for decades has provided a cultural vibrancy and economic support to the city and state.

Every month, Latinos Progresando hosts a food pantry with Nourishing Hope, feeding 50 families and senior citizens with their main source of food. Last fall, as staff hauled heavy boxes, a shrill sound pierced the air — whistles, alerting us that ICE was nearby and unleashing their enforcement on our community. Soon after the whistles, the phones rang. Families apologetic and sad, explaining they wouldn't be able to make it for pickup. Through this statement, I will share the disruptive harm this federal targeting inflicted on our community. But as I do this, I want all of us to think about the level of deep terror it would take for you to decide to sacrifice your family's source of food.

> **From one day to the next, workers had to make the decision of whether a day's wage was worth risking being detained.**
>
> **Nubia Willman, former Chief Programs Officer, Latinos Progresando**

Operation Midway Blitz began close to Mexican Independence Day. This day is widely celebrated in Chicago with communities and families attending parades, civic

events, and hosting celebrations. The city is a mecca to many Midwestern Latinos who share pride in this cultural diaspora. This September, instead of seeing families and people waving flags, we saw them taken with fear as they learned ICE would begin their raids.

Then quickly, we saw that there was no good or bad immigrant in the eyes of the federal government. In fact, 97% of the individuals detained had no criminal record. And instead, residents in our community, from the most vulnerable to even U.S. citizens, would be harmed by these actions.

From one day to the next, workers had to make the decision of whether a day's wage was worth risking being detained. The lack of workers impacted projects, services, and their own financial stability.

The impact of immigration enforcement affected neighborhood stability, reduced participation in community life, and created lasting fear throughout our neighborhoods. This harm seeps into the social psyche of a community that isn't cured overnight or forgotten when raids end.

Nubia Willman

A college student who should have been getting ready for a new semester instead started getting up at four in the morning to work for their parents' food cart to keep their parents safe while bringing home some money. Similarly, a young attorney in the private sector, who had been focusing on honing their skills, took on the financial responsibilities for their family, giving up their wages to keep their loved ones home.

The federal raids caused disruption and harm in every aspect of our lives. We saw severe revenue losses ranging from 20 to 50% for some Latino-owned businesses. In the Cermak Corridor in Marshall Square, we lost four businesses due to this disruption. Once open and welcoming businesses now keep their door locked and require customers to buzz in to protect their patrons. To limit their exposure, a small business owner decided to sleep in their own business rather than venture outside and go home.

The impact of immigration enforcement affected neighborhood stability, reduced participation in community life, and created lasting fear throughout our neighborhoods. This harm seeps into the social psyche of a community that isn't cured overnight or forgotten when raids end.

However, it is worth uplifting the Herculean effort taken on by community organizers, state legislators, nonprofits, civic and faith leaders, and private attorneys to protect the community. Their work to provide resources, creating safe spaces, and defending the rule of law is what made the difference in not causing even more devastating impacts. Community organizations like the one I work for also face a disruption, now called to respond rapidly to growing emergency needs, while also helping calm fears and connecting families to resources.

And I want to end on that note. Back to that day in October, where families said they'd just go without food for that month instead of risking a pickup. What the team did was what any other true Chicagoan would do in that situation. They put the boxes in their cars and delivered them to the families, because we protect and defend each other, and hold the belief that our government should do the same.

We ask this body to take into account the long-lasting effects of this operation, the needless harm inflicted on the community, and call for true accountability. Thank you.

It is worth uplifting the Herculean effort taken on by community organizers, state legislators, nonprofits, civic and faith leaders, and private attorneys to protect the community.

Nubia Willman



From Left to Right: Jennifer Aguilar, Executive Director, Little Village Chamber of Commerce; Amina Barhumi, Executive Director of the Muslim Civic Coalition

Amina Barhumi

Executive Director of the Muslim Civic Coalition

Good afternoon, Chair Garza and former Chair Castro. Thank you for convening this hearing. My name is Amina Barhumi. I'm the Executive Director of the Muslim Civic Coalition. We're a statewide nonpartisan organization dedicated to advancing racial, economic, and educational equity, and we empower Illinois' diverse communities to fully participate in our democracy through policy advocacy, coalition building, voter education, and community-driven research.

Illinois is home to the largest per capita Muslim population in the nation. According to the Illinois Muslim Report, we are — the Muslim community in Illinois is — the most racially and ethnically diverse in the country. No single race or ethnicity forms a majority. We include Black, Asian, Arab, white, Latino, African, South Asian, and many other backgrounds.

And so when we talk about discrimination, often, especially with regards to immigration, often times it's compounded. Roughly half of Illinois Muslims are immigrants or come from immigrant families. Half of our community reports facing discrimination because of our faith, and immigration enforcement and policing tactics are too often at the heart of that discrimination.

Operation Midway Blitz and the relentless federal immigration enforcement sweeping across Chicago have created devastation in our communities and a disruption that reaches far beyond those

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Amina Barhumi

detained. This indiscriminate, coordinated, and systemic effort has instilled a climate of terror and fear amongst immigrant families and communities, and I'll describe a little bit more about what that looks like, including families from Somalia, Palestine, Pakistan, Iran, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, and beyond.

And so this fear paralyzes daily life. What it looks like is a Somali mother recently told us that she no longer lets her children play outside after school. A Palestinian father, while driving his daughter to school, is constantly checking his rearview mirror because oftentimes what might seem like a regular traffic stop is when ICE is detaining folks.

Families hesitate to attend mosques, seek medical care, or even claim benefits that their citizen children directly need. DACA recipients and longtime immigrant families are afraid to tell their own stories publicly, fearing government retaliation, a hovering anxiety that settles over our communities.

And this is not new. There are years of documented cases showing federal agencies using immigration tools to target and intimidate Muslim communities. What it looks like is travelers are placed on watch lists and subjugated to prolonged border delays with threats of travel restrictions they use to coerce them to become FBI informants.

Lawful permanent residents have been pressured by CBP officials to sign the I-407 and voluntarily abandon their green cards. Muslim travelers routinely face invasive secondary screenings filled with unconstitutional questions about their religious practices, the mosques they attend, their private social media posts, and political views, especially advocacy for Palestine.

And I'll say that I have been a recipient of these kinds of questions while traveling, and I am a U.S. citizen. Particularly chilling is how this enforcement is weaponized to silence dissent and punish advocacy, particularly now for Palestinian human rights. Going to give the example of Salah Slaisor, who's a most recent example, one of many, who's a leader and longtime Palestinian American father and grandfather.

The President of the Islamic Society of Milwaukee was surrounded by more than ten ICE agents simply while driving. A respected community pillar who has lived lawfully in this country for over three decades, he was ripped from his family into ICE detention. And the government claims that he broke the law, yet we know these justifications are too often trumped-up excuses used to legitimize violence and illegally detain fathers, mothers, children, and community members.

We have also witnessed ICE targeting student activists on campuses, and the famous examples that we know of are Mahmoud Khalil and Rumeysa Ozturk, both of which stood up for human rights. And these are menacing messages to every activist that if you speak truth about human rights, you risk being disappeared. By your own government. And so this is not law enforcement, this is political retaliation.

These are menacing messages to every activist that if you speak truth about human rights, you risk being disappeared. By your own government. And so this is not law enforcement, this is political retaliation.

Amina Barhumi

Here in Illinois, we cannot claim moral high ground while an anti-BDS (boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) law passed in 2015, still on the books despite repeal efforts, remains in force. This law bars public pension funds from divesting from companies complicit in the occupation apartheid, costing our pension systems $149 million in lost returns.

It sends a clear message that certain voices, often immigrant voices, and certain forms of peaceful

advocacy are actually not allowed. And so this normalizes the punishment of dissent and mirrors the chilling effect that we see at the federal government, including within the immigration system.

Even in the face of this repression, multi-faith, multi-ethnic, multi-racial groups and coalitions continue to stand united, delivering know your rights training, rapid responding on signal, using whistles, sanctuary supports, opening up their homes, their community centers, feeding those who need to be fed, providing mutual aid.

As we work to protect immigrants today and defend free speech and the right to dissent, we are protecting the entirety of our democracy. ICE targeting operations continue in our neighborhoods, at courthouses, and in workplaces, and they're occurring downstate as well. We just visited communities where families continue to tell us that they remain isolated and unsure where they can seek help.

As we work to protect immigrants today and defend free speech and the right to dissent, we are protecting the entirety of our democracy.

Amina Barhumi

Trust in public institutions has been shattered. When our schools, hospitals, and houses of worship no longer feel safe, our democracy itself, it's under attack. And so we'll continue to do this work to fight for dignity and for a voice, and we are grateful and hope that the recommendations to protect families and faith communities and our constitutional rights are front and center.

Thank you.

Jennifer Aguilar

Executive Director, Little Village Chamber of Commerce

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jennifer Aguilar, and I'm the Executive Director of the Little Village Chamber of Commerce. I was born and raised in Little Village, and I still live there today. The Little Village Chamber of Commerce has represented local businesses and the bilingual business community since 1989. We work closely with the small businesses and workers, families, and residents who make Little Village the economic powerhouse that it is.

Last fall, our community experienced a level of fear and disruption that fundamentally changed the daily life in Little Village. Residents woke up to helicopters overhead. Businesses monitored enforcement activity in real time. Families stopped going out. Community organizations mobilized rapid response efforts while local businesses struggled to remain open and reassure employees and consumers.

Little Village is home to one of the most important commercial corridors in Chicago. Along 26th Street, there are more than a thousand businesses, and for years, the corridor has been recognized as the second Magnificent Mile, second only to Michigan Avenue, and the economic activity in the city of Chicago; 26th Street generates more than $900 million in annual sales revenue.

But 26th Street is more than a commercial corridor. It is a cultural destination, a gathering place, and the heart of a community that generations of families have helped build. Families travel to 26th Street from across the Midwest and from other states to shop, celebrate, and eat, and to experience Mexican culture and community.

Jennifer Aguilar, Executive Director, Little Village Chamber of Commerce

But 26th Street is more than a commercial corridor. It is a cultural destination, a gathering place, and the heart of a community that generations of families have helped build. Families travel to 26th Street from across the Midwest and from other states to shop, celebrate, and eat, and to experience Mexican culture and community.

> **Many business owners are now so far behind on rent, utility, vendor payments, and other bills that they do not believe they will be able to hold on much longer.**
>
> **Jennifer Aguilar**

That tourism is a major part of what sustains our small businesses. Before the large-scale raids even began, fear was already spreading through the community after ICE agents and the National Guard arrived in Chicago. Rumors spread daily, families were scared, businesses were on edge, and people did not know what was coming next.

The fear became so intense that in late August and early September, Mexican Independence Day celebrations across the city were being canceled. And for the first time in the 54-year history of the Little Village Mexican Independence Day Parade, there were serious discussions about whether it was safe to move forward.

That parade is more than an event. It is a tradition that generations of families have grown up with. It represents culture, pride, and community. Ultimately, the community chose to move forward because people wanted to show unity and resilience. For many, simply showing up became an act of resistance. Even so, attendance was visibly down. The parade typically draws about half a million people, and last year's turnout was roughly half of what we normally see.

As Operation Midway Blitz intensified, the effects on the business community became immediate and severe. Local business owners reported losing between 40 and 70% of their revenue compared to the same period the year before. Businesses reduced hours, they cut staff, and they struggled to survive. At the same time, the scenes unfolding in Little Village were being broadcast across the country. Images of raids, tactical gear, tear gas, and chaos became associated with the neighborhood nationally. Visitors stopped coming. Families who would normally travel from neighboring states to spend weekends shopping along 26th Street stayed away.

A corridor normally associated with culture, celebration, and family suddenly became associated with fear and violence. One moment that captures the atmosphere many residents experienced on a consistent basis happened on November 8th. That morning, elderly residents were out running errands, families



From Left to Right: Frankie Miranda, President and CEO, Hispanic Federation; Gloria Canchola, Owner, Panaderia Copal

were shopping, and people were going about their normal Sunday, Saturday, when federal immigration agents arrived at 26th Street and Pulaski. Agents threw tear gas and brandished guns in the middle of the commercial corridor. People ran in fear while bystanders rushed to get elderly residents and families to safety inside nearby businesses. After the agents left, the neighborhood felt completely different. The streets were empty. Businesses were empty.

The energy of Little Village was gone. It stayed that way for a long time afterward. And the reality is that many businesses still have not recovered.

About two months ago, the Chamber conducted outreach to hear directly from business owners about how they were, how they were doing months after Operation Midway Blitz. Even though ICE activity has decreased, business owners consistently told us that things have not returned to normal for them. Sales remain low. Foot traffic has improved slowly, but not anywhere near the levels businesses depended on

The businesses being hit the hardest are Latino-owned small businesses that spent decades building the economic strength of this corridor and this community. When workers lose hours, families lose income. When families are afraid to leave home, businesses lose customers.

Jennifer Aguilar

before last fall. Many business owners are now so far behind on rent, utility, vendor payments, and other bills that they do not believe they will be able to hold on much longer. One business owner shared that she had to pawn her own jewelry just to pay rent after operating in Little Village for more than ten years.

What we continue to hear from business owners is exhaustion, uncertainty, and fear about the future. And unlike during COVID-19, many business owners feel there has been little recognition of economic damage caused by these operations and no meaningful relief available to help stabilize them.

The businesses being hit the hardest are Latino-owned small businesses that spent decades building the economic strength of this corridor and this community. When workers lose hours, families lose income. When families are afraid to leave home, businesses lose customers. Fear became economic instability, and economic instability became long-term harm to an entire neighborhood.

Little Village is resilient, but resilience should not be mistaken for the absence of harm. The stress, uncertainty, and economic damage from last fall are still affecting the community today. Families, workers, and business owners deserve to live and work without fear disrupting every part of daily life.

Thank you.



From Left to Right: Karina Ayala Bermejo, President and CEO, Instituto del Progreso Latino; Michelle Garcia, Deputy Legal Director, Roger Baldwin Foundation and ACLU of Illinois

PANEL 3B

Community-Wide Disruption from Immigration Enforcement

Marty Castro:

All right, we're going to get started. If everyone could take your seats, please. This is a continuation of Panel 3A. This is Panel 3B regarding the community-wide disruptions. We're going to have a focus on stories involving workforce disruptions, business losses, economic impacts because of the federal enforcement action on school activity and community life.

These testimonies are going to help us provide a clearer picture of the policies and the enforcement practices, and how they've affected and continue to impact all aspects of the community at large. Panelists will have six minutes each. You have two microphones in front of you. You need to speak loudly into both, because they're for different purposes.

We will be very tight on time, so we'll ask you to wrap up when you see your time almost running out. I'll introduce the panelists now: Michelle Garcia with the ACLU of Illinois, Karina Ayala Bermejo with Instituto del Progreso Latino, Shelly Ruzika with Arise Chicago, and then we will have testimony from Jane Doe, a parent mentor. But in order to protect their identity, that person will testify from behind that protected panel right there. So while you will hear them, you won't see them. With that, I will ask Ms. Garcia to begin her testimony.

Michelle Garcia

Deputy Legal Director, Roger Baldwin Foundation and ACLU of Illinois

Good afternoon. My name is Michelle Garcia. I'm the Deputy Legal Director of the Roger Baldwin Foundation and the ACLU of Illinois. We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that has been fighting for the civil rights and liberties of people in Illinois, including immigrants, for over a hundred years. Today, I will discuss two ACLU of Illinois cases which show how the federal government has illegally arrested thousands of people in Illinois, then detained them in horrible conditions at the Broadview ICE Processing Center, only to be deported or removed from the country, resulting in not only constitutional violations, separations of families, but generational trauma for our Latino communities and other immigrant communities.

Let's talk about the thousands of people illegally arrested before and after and during Operation Midway Blitz. We have a case called Castañon Nava v. the Department of Homeland Security. In 2018, we actually filed this case with National Immigrant Justice Center, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, and Organized Communities Against Deportation.

> **From 2022 to 2024, we did not receive notice of any warrantless arrests by immigration authorities. But immediately on January 20th, 2025, ICE, and then later CBP, began violating the decree, arresting people without warrants based on how they looked, if they were in Latino communities, and where they worked, such as Mexican restaurants or construction sites.**
>
> Michelle Garcia, Deputy Legal Director, Roger Baldwin Foundation and ACLU of Illinois

We sued DHS and ICE for conducting traffic stops and arresting without warrants about a hundred people who appeared Latino. We entered into a federal consent decree, which requires DHS to follow the Fourth Amendment and federal immigration law. The decree requires that if DHS arrests someone in Illinois and four other Midwest states without a warrant and probable cause that the person is a flight risk, they can be released from detention.

From 2022 to 2024, we did not receive notice of any warrantless arrests by immigration authorities. But immediately on January 20th, 2025, ICE, and then later CBP, began violating the decree, arresting people without warrants based on how they looked, if they were in Latino communities, and where they worked, such as Mexican restaurants or construction sites.

By March, we had filed a motion to enforce, and Operation Midway Blitz began in September. From June 11th to October 7th, the Department of Homeland Security stated in court filings that there were 1,852 arrests in the Northern District of Illinois that were likely warrantless. With CBP, the number rose to over 3,000.

DHS court filings reflected that most people arrested for violating civil immigration law did not have a criminal history or pose a risk for the community's safety. Our clients are breadwinners, day laborers, delivery drivers, small business owners, moms and dads with various immigration status, from undocumented people who've lived here 30 years without an issue, to asylum seekers, to people with work authorization, and people adjusting their status. Many have U.S. citizen family members.

In contrast, our clients' accounts and bystander video reflect that many of these arrests were violent, indeed criminal. Masked men blocked cars on streets as people

> **From June 11th to October 7th, the Department of Homeland Security stated in court filings that there were 1,852 arrests in the Northern District of Illinois that were likely warrantless. With CBP, the number rose to over 3,000.**
>
> Michelle Garcia

were returning from work or dropping off kids at school. They broke windows, pulled people out of cars, and even used Blackhawk helicopters to raid a building without warrants in the middle of the night.

The terror did not stop there. DHS sent most of the people to the Broadview ICE holding facility, a place where people are supposed to stay briefly for processing before being released or detained. But in June, DHS changed the policy and now required anyone who entered the country without inspection by Immigration to be held mandatorily rather than released on bond.

That increase in arrests and this policy led to extreme overcrowding at Broadview. People were subjected to inhumane and unconstitutional conditions: no food, no water, no medical care, no access to legal counsel.

Michelle Garcia

That increase in arrests and this policy led to extreme overcrowding at Broadview. People were subjected to inhumane and unconstitutional conditions: no food, no water, no medical care, no access to legal counsel. This was a place where people disappeared. Family members knew their family member was arrested and did not know how to find them or contact them at Broadview. By DHS's own records, by October 22nd, 2025, of the 1,852 people arrested from ICE from June to October, less than half remained in the country, 750.

The reason why the other people left is that they were subjected to these inhumane conditions, and many gave up and left. Since January 2025, we have filed 12 motions to enforce our consent decree. We've been able to get hundreds of people released and remove the conditions of release for hundreds more. But by DHS's own records, it should have been thousands of people.

I'd like to briefly talk about our case involving Broadview ICE Processing Center, Moreno Gonzalez v. Mullin. With MacArthur Justice Center and Eimer Stahl, on October 30th, 2025, we filed this class action on behalf of Pablo Moreno Gonzalez, a day laborer, father of U.S. children, and a resident of Chicago for 30 years, and Felipe Zamacona, a delivery driver with U.S. citizen family members who's also lived in Chicago for 30 years, who were detained at Broadview. Our complaint included 40 declarations from immigrants who had been at Broadview, as well as congressional representatives Danny Davis, Chewy Garcia, and Delia Ramirez, who were blocked from accessing the facility

We allege the conditions were so awful they violated the Fifth Amendment rights to due process and basic needs like food and water. At a full evidentiary hearing for a temporary restraining order, Judge Gettleman described Broadview as a concentration camp. The evidence showed in rooms designed to hold 30 people that there were more than 100 people shoulder to shoulder for days on end. People were sleeping on concrete floors next to overflowing toilets, with no access to soap or water. Broadview was a place where people disappeared. In November, the court entered a temporary restraining order requiring DHS to fix the inhumane and unconstitutional conditions, and we have seen a decrease in the number of people detained at Broadview and a mild improvement in the conditions.

We are still concerned with the access to medical care and translation of documents and language access because that is often how our clients are being coerced to leave. By agreement, DHS has agreed to extend the TRO while we proceed toward trial or settlement. We continue to visit each week and talk to our clients who raise up issues that we bring to the court's attention.

These two cases show that DHS arrested thousands of people without warrants, subjected them to horrible conditions at Broadview, denied access to counsel, and indeed their own family members, and many hundreds of people left voluntarily or were deported, people that never should have been arrested in the first place.

Michelle Garcia

These two cases show that DHS arrested thousands of people without warrants, subjected them to horrible conditions at Broadview, denied access to counsel, and indeed their own family members, and many hundreds of people left voluntarily or were deported, people that never should have been arrested in the first place and had a right to be released based on our decree.

They separated hundreds of families with U.S. citizen family members, resulting in trauma to our own Latino community and to immigrant communities throughout Illinois. Thank you.

Karina Ayala Bermejo

President and CEO of Instituto del Progreso Latino

My name is Karina Ayala Bermejo, and I serve as the President and CEO of Instituto del Progreso Latino, a community-based organization whose mission it is to ensure that all immigrants reach their full potential. And we do that through education, training, workforce development, legal services, and then some.

Part of the nearly five decades of Instituto's mission has been directly alongside immigrant families as they pursue opportunity, stability, and economic mobility. Our work includes the adult education, English language classes, citizenship preparation, legal career pathways, youth development, and wraparound services that strengthen the entire family.

> **We are the largest submitter of citizenship applications in the state of Illinois, so when our citizenship program was attacked, canceled illegally, we knew it was intentional.**
>
> Karina Ayala Bermejo, President and CEO of Instituto del Progreso Latino

We are the largest submitter of citizenship applications in the state of Illinois, so when our citizenship program was attacked, canceled illegally, we knew it was intentional. At Instituto, we often say, "Register the student, but enroll the whole family." We understand that when one person walks through the door, they are connected to children, to spouses, to grandparents, and entire support systems whose well-being is interconnected.

Because of that reality, ICE enforcement activity does not impact one individual. It creates disruption across the entire family system, our entire community, affecting children's sense of safety, parents' ability to work, students' attendance, mental health, transportation, childcare, and economic stability.

Since Operation Midway Blitz and the increase on ongoing ICE activity, Instituto had growing fears and anxiety from students visibly, from parents, adult learners, workers, and newly arrived families across our programs. Students missed classes. Attendance dropped. Families hesitated to go to work, to travel to job sites.

And parents expressed fear about routine activities like taking children to school, attending medical appointments, or participating in community programs. We, Instituto, ensured that the safest place to be is within our doors. The safest place for students to be is at school. But adult learners who were actively pursuing English classes, workforce credentials, citizenship preparation, now are really in uncertain times.

> **How is it going to be safe to continue to participate in public life and educational settings with what may be lurking down the street? Many of our families are from mixed-status households, with US citizen children, lawful permanent residents, undocumented family members all living together.**
>
> Karina Ayala Bermejo

How is it going to be safe to continue to participate in public life and educational settings with what may be lurking down the street? Many of our families are from mixed-status households, with U.S. citizen children, lawful permanent residents, undocumented family members all living together.

Fear experienced by one quickly spread throughout the entire household. We had numerous examples of our 250 employees at Instituto that had such fear that they too were calling off from coming to work. The reality is so deeply personal for many of our staff, for many of the employees themselves.

Numerous individuals required medical attention from panic attacks and others every time our signal alerts went off. Many times, Instituto had to go on soft and hard lockdowns because of that reality. As an organization rooted in the community, our staff didn't simply observe the events from a distance. They're living through them daily, uncertain trauma affecting incidents every day.

We recently experienced the devastating impact of these enforcement actions firsthand when our very own Diego, who had just recently graduated, was taken from his family in front of his house on his way to work without a warrant. He was taken immediately to the detention center where we tried to reach him, and as an attorney, I should have been allowed to, but was prevented. Ultimately sent to Kentucky and eventually deported to Mexico, he should have been released. There was no warrant. He had no criminal background. He was an A student and a stellar soccer player. This individual had been doing exactly what our systems encourage immigrants to do, pursuing an education, building skills, working towards economic opportunity and stability.

Families who have spent years building and stabilizing, learning English, pursuing careers, becoming citizens, opening up businesses, purchasing homes, supporting their children's education, are being punished and pushed into fear. We are deeply concerned about the long-term impact this climate has on their educational attainment, workforce participation, mental health, and family cohesion.

Immigrant families are not withdrawing because they lack commitment to education and opportunity. They're retreating because fear has become part of their daily life.

Karina Ayala Bermejo

Immigrant families are not withdrawing because they lack commitment to education and opportunity. They're retreating because fear has become part of their daily life. Whether it's transportation or being part of community life, our community at large is suffering. Instituto remains committed to ensuring families have access to accurate information, trusted support systems, legal services, educational opportunities, and most importantly, treating them with dignity and humanity. Thank you.



Audience members at People's Hearing in Chicago



Shelly Ruzika, Arise Chicago

Shelly Ruzika

Arise Chicago

Good afternoon. Thank you for having us. My name is Shelly Ruzika, here today representing Arise Chicago. For the past 35 years, Arise Chicago has organized the collective power of working class immigrants in partnership with faith communities to uplift all workers.

Arise members are immigrant workers who live and work across the city in nearly every ward. They work across industries, restaurants, hospitality, domestic workers cleaning homes, caring for children and elders, drivers, food production, and manufacturing. Our members represent the workers that run Chicago. No one eats, builds, or gets around without their labor. They were also on the front lines of the state-sponsored terror campaign named Midway Blitz.

> **Our members represent the workers that run Chicago. No one eats, builds, or gets around without their labor.**
>
> Shelly Ruzika, *Arise Chicago*

Ever since the 2024 election, Arise began preparing, creating materials, and training thousands of workers in person and virtually. We noticed a difference between new workers in our doors and trained members. Preparedness did not eliminate all fear, but it gave workers a feeling of more control over their lives by having a plan, being connected to an organization, and knowing they were not alone.

> **We were proudly part of efforts by dozens of organizations that led Tom Homan to complain that Chicago was too educated on our rights.**
>
> Shelly Ruzika

We were proudly part of efforts by dozens of organizations that led Tom Homan to complain that Chicago was too educated on our rights. Our members have expressed a range of responses to the election and following terror campaign, from being fearful to even leave the house to go to work to earn money for their families, to direct defiance — with one member saying, "I've done nothing wrong. Why should I be afraid?" — to the most common response of being very worried about ICE, yet having no choice but to go to work to support their families. Since Midway Blitz, we've had a member kidnapped outside his workplace, a

> **The federal government's attacks on immigrants are a direct attack on worker rights ...This administration has emboldened bad employers to take advantage of worker fear, whether that's through discriminatory harassment or verbal abuse, not paying for all hours worked, or dangerous conditions.**
>
> Shelly Ruzika

member assaulted by ICE during the immigration action and hospitalized, relatives of at least two members abducted, and one of our own organizers detained outside Broadview.

These clearly racist attacks targeting not only, but primarily, Black and Brown immigrants also serve other purposes outside of a general instilling of fear. First, it's an attempt to normalize a military presence in American cities to suppress the vote ahead of the midterm elections. Attacks on immigrants are an attack on democracy. Also, an attempt to weaken the one main organized balance to corporate power, organized workers, primarily unions. Attacks on immigrants are an attack on worker power and a boon to corporate power. I want to emphasize this. The federal government's attacks on immigrants are a direct attack on worker rights.

This is dangerous for the lives and livelihoods of immigrant workers, all workers, for good employers, and the overall economy that relies on immigrant labor. This administration has emboldened bad employers to take advantage of worker fear, whether that's through discriminatory harassment or verbal abuse, not paying for all hours worked, or dangerous conditions.

I'm going to share two examples from our members. First, imagine working indoors, but with no heat, in subzero temperatures during a Chicago winter. Now, imagine the level of terror you have to feel to not do anything about that. In the winter of 2025, after the inauguration, the White House's threats and the presence of ICE and CBP in Chicago spread fear throughout workplaces, and bosses knew it.

At one site where Arise had previously organized workers, the company did not turn on the heat. Workers only shared this with Arise months later. This is the chilling effect. This is what ICE terror can do to workers' willingness to speak up. I really want to stress that these were workers who know their rights, workers who have organized and fought their bosses to end other abusive practices and even win wage increases.

> **Emboldened employers are taking advantage of ICE-instilled fear to violate labor laws.**
>
> Shelly Ruzika

If these workers could be so paralyzed to not confront their boss, it's hard to imagine the level of abuse under other employers, other bad employers in this climate. I'll repeat, an attack on immigrants is a danger to all workers' rights, worker health, and safety.

A second example. Imagine you or your child being sick and feeling that you have to choose between earning the paycheck to take care of your family or going to work, and between that and taking care of your health. Before the election and before coming to Arise, there were workers at a production site who were punished for taking paid sick time, a violation of our local Chicago Earned Sick Time Ordinance. They'd be taken off the schedule for one to several days in retaliation for using their time.

But with ARISE's support, they organized and ended this illegal practice. But now, under ICE terror, workers report that while the employer no longer punishes them for using their sick time, management simply does not approve their time off. This is a new form of controlling and abusing their workers.

Emboldened employers are taking advantage of ICE-instilled fear to violate labor laws. Now, it's always scary to confront your boss. There's always a fear of losing your job and your ability to provide for your

family. But now there's an intense added fear of kidnapping, physical injury, or even death at the hands of an out-of-control authoritarian military force based on the color of your skin, your accent, or your job. As we say in the worker rights movement, an injury to one is an injury to all.

Now, that's not just a nice sentiment of solidarity, it's real. Just like raising the minimum wage lifts all workers' wages, diminishing the rights of any workers hurts all workers. At the same time, I want to be very clear that workers continue to come to Arise Chicago to learn their rights and improve their working conditions.

Workers still want and deserve good jobs with dignified treatment. We will continue organizing in workplaces. While the federal government has failed and is indeed attacking workers, with our partners, we are organizing to win gains for workers in Illinois. We recently traveled with dozens of our members to Springfield to advocate for paid family medical leave and protection from extreme temperatures at work.

Arise Chicago and our members are the continuation of the proud legacy of the fight for the eight-hour day and the birth of the American labor movement. We will continue to be the city of big shoulders, the city that works, and now, the city at the forefront of protecting our democratic rights on the job and in this country.

Thank you.

Marty Castro:

We will now hear from Jane Doe, a parent mentor who will testify confidentially behind the screen. You may proceed.

Jane Doe:

Hi, I'm a mother of three boys, one 19, one 17, and one 12. I'm a resident of Little Village, one of the neighborhoods attacked by Midway Blitz really hard. Thank you for this opportunity for sharing my history, but the history of the other families, too, in the same way, in the same neighborhood. And I want to say after I finish this part, I would like to share in Spanish because my first language is Spanish and I want to share with you every detail about the history and how it's important for me, for my community, and for my sons how you can help to change the future for other people so they won't be in the same situation like us.

He sido residente de esa comunidad por muchísimos años y voluntaria en diferentes organizaciones y las escuelas de mis hijos. Cuando estos operativos empezaron, nuestra comunidad empezó a cambiar. Empezamos a vivir bajo el miedo de hablar nuestro idioma, de lucir en el color. Empezamos a vivir otra vez bajo las sombras, de no querer salir por miedo a faltarle a nuestros hijos.

Nuestra comunidad empezó a ser liderada por nuestros propios hijos protegiendo a sus padres. Empezaron a ser ellos quienes iban a la tienda para protegernos de no volver a casa.

En mi propia familia, mi esposo salió a trabajar, y durante una persecución que, eh, los agentes tenían, encontraron signos de el trabajo de construcción y se regresaron. Mi esposo fue detenido por ICE en diciembre 16 y no lo volvimos a ver. Él solo estaba buscando trabajo y alimento para su familia. Era un hombre que no tenía ningún récord criminal y era un gran padre para mis hijos.

> **Empezamos a vivir bajo el miedo de hablar nuestro idioma, de lucir en el color. Empezamos a vivir otra vez bajo las sombras, de no querer salir por miedo a faltarle a nuestros hijos.**
>
> **Jane Doe**

A través de esa situación entendimos que había muchos procedimientos que se habían roto. Él jamás recibió una orden para ser detenido. No tiene — no tenía una forma I-213. Él tuvo que firmar su salida voluntaria porque no teníamos otra opción.

Y ahora nosotros quedamos sin el sustento de nuestra familia. Y quedamos en un limbo porque yo no tenía trabajo y empezar desde cero porque no teníamos a nuestro — no tenía mi esposo y mis hijos no tenían a su figura paterna.

Mi esposo fue detenido por ICE en diciembre 16 y no lo volvimos a ver. Él solo estaba buscando trabajo y alimento para su familia. Era un hombre que no tenía ningún récord criminal y era un gran padre para mis hijos.

Jane Doe

Me gustaría que entendieran que nuestras familias tienen tristeza, coraje, miedo. Pero aún tenemos voz para querer seguir luchando porque sean procesos justos. Que este país que se ha basado en una comunidad de inmigrantes siga las leyes que se han hecho y que se han escrito. Y no solo para las personas por su color, su voz y su raza. Sino para jóvenes como mis hijos que nacieron en este país, y que ahora viven teniendo ansiedad, depresión.

Quiero que consideren que te — hoy con miedo, pero también con la certeza. Les pido que sigamos luchando porque sigan siendo procesos justos, que se sigan las leyes. Y que sean liberadas las personas que solo han cometido el delito de buscar un futuro mejor.

Que no es justo que un niño de siete años pierda de vista a su mamá treinta segundos. Y tengo un ataque de miedo pidiendo ayuda, que lo ayuden a buscar a su mamá.

Les pido por favor que consideren el daño que han hecho durante estos operativos, legalmente, económicamente, pero también en la salud mental de muchas generaciones.

Que nos ayuden a seguir peleando y tener una voz que es justa, que no tengamos que seguirnos escondiendo, independientemente de nuestra situación, nuestro color y nuestro idioma. Porque todos los seres humanos nacimos libres, y merecemos la oportunidad de seguir luchando por una mejor vida.

Gracias por esta oportunidad, por documentar todo esto, que solo — no solo cambió la vida de mi familia, sino de una comunidad entera.

Jane Doe, English translation:

I have been a resident of that community for many years, and I also have been a volunteer in different organizations and my children's schools. When these operations began, our community started changing. We were living in fear of speaking our language, of expressing our best selves. And we began living again in the shadows, afraid to go outside because we didn't want to not be with our children.

We were living in fear of speaking our language, of expressing our best selves.

Jane Doe

In our community, our own children started being the leaders, protecting their parents. And they were the ones that started going to the store so they could protect us from not coming back home.

In my own family, my husband went out to work And then during a raid that the agents were doing, they found some signs of construction work, so they went back. My husband was detained by ICE on the 16th of December, and we never saw him again. He was only looking for work and food for his family. He was a person that did not have a criminal record, and he was a great father to my children.

And due to the situation, we understood that many procedures had been broken. He never got an order to be detained, and he didn't have an I-213 form. He had to sign his own voluntary departure because we did not have another option.

And now we are without the breadwinner for our family. And we are in limbo because I did not have work, and we had to start from the very beginning because I did not have a husband and my kids did not have a father.

I would like you to understand that our families are sad, they're angry, they are afraid. But we still have a voice because we want to keep on fighting so there are fair processes. That this country that is based on an immigrant community keep on following the laws that have been made and written. And not only for people because of their color, their voice, and their race, but also for the youth like my children that were born in this country and now live with anxiety and depression.

> **My husband was detained by ICE on the 16th of December, and we never saw him again. He was only looking for work and food for his family. He was a person that did not have a criminal record, and he was a great father to my children.**
>
> Jane Doe

And then I want to let you know that today I am here with fear, but also with certainty. We have to continue this fight so we have due process and the laws are followed. And so that people are set free whose only crime is the crime of seeking a better future.

That it's not fair that when a child that is seven years old loses sight of his mother for thirty seconds that it causes me to have a panic attack, to frantically ask for help, for someone to help him look for his mother.

> **We have to continue this fight so we have due process and the laws are followed. And so that people are set free whose only crime is the crime of seeking a better future.**
>
> Jane Doe

Please, I want you to consider the damage that has been caused during all these raids, legally, economically, but also to the mental health of many generations.

Help us keep on fighting and have a voice that is fair, so that we no longer have to hide, regardless of our legal situation, our color and our language. Because all human beings are born free, and we deserve the opportunity to keep on fighting for a better life.

Thank you for this opportunity and also for documenting all of this because it not only changed the life of my family, but also of an entire community.

Marty Castro:

Gracias, señora, por su testimonio y le prometo que nosotros vamos a estar a su lado en esta lucha para usted y para todas familias como la suya que siguen sufriendo y que van a sufrir por lo que les han pasado. Eh, nosotros aquí como la presidenta de la Comisión de Civiles Derechos de los Estados Unidos y yo como activista y todos que están aquí en este cuarto con nosotros, estamos con usted. Que Dios la bendiga.

Thank you, ma'am, for your testimony, and I promise you that we will stand by your side in this fight, for you and for all families like yours who continue to suffer and will continue to suffer because of what has happened to them. We here — the Chairwoman of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission and myself as an activist, and everyone here in this room with us — are with you. God bless you.

That's what it's about. That's the most powerful testimony that we can share with anyone who wonders what this is really about. It's about the pain and the suffering that's being inflicted on families that are law-abiding, hardworking. They are the truest Americans, not the people that are rounding them up, not the people that are taking them to prison, not the people that are taking them out of this country and away from their families.

> **It's about the pain and the suffering that's being inflicted on families that are law-abiding, hardworking. They are the truest Americans, not the people that are rounding them up, not the people that are taking them to prison, not the people that are taking them out of this country and away from their families.**
>
> Marty Castro

These are the real stories that we have to remember as we continue the fight and as we continue to document these atrocities, because that's what they are, atrocities that are being committed by our own government against our own people.

So thank you, panelists. Thank you all. Your testimony was very powerful as well. We appreciate your participation today. We're now going to transition to Panel 4A, so we'll ask the other panelists to begin to come to the podium. Thank you.

PANEL 4A

Impacted Individuals and Families

Marty Castro:

Obviously, we've just experienced some very powerful testimony, and we're going to continue to experience powerful testimony for the balance of the day. This portion of the hearing centers on the voices of individuals and families who have experienced the effects of immigration enforcement in Chicago.

These testimonies are critical to capture, and we appreciate your all being here today to share these experiences with us. So I will introduce the panelists. A reminder again, we have six minutes each. Speak into both microphones as they're for two different purposes. Today we have Marcela Rodriguez of Enlace Chicago, Christina Ramirez Rudecki, an impacted individual, and Marcos Carbajal from Carnitas Uruapan, who provided this wonderful lunch for us today. Thank you. Dr. Angela Sedeno, who is from the Kedzie Center, and we will also once again hear from an anonymous community member, a John Doe, who will also speak at the end behind this panel. So with that, Ms. Rodriguez, please proceed.

Marcela Rodriguez

Executive Director, Enlace Chicago

Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. First of all, thank you for the opportunity to be here and speak and share the experience that both Enlace Chicago and the Little Village community encountered during Operation Midway Blitz.

As Marty said, my name is Marcela Rodriguez. I am the Executive Director of Enlace Chicago, and I'm also the Co-Chair of the Illinois Latino Agenda. Enlace serves the Little Village community, which is one of the largest Latino communities, not just in

> **Our restaurants were empty. Our streets were a ghost town. And with the sounds of whistles on a daily basis, helicopters directly above our heads, crowds gathering, pushing ICE back and CBP, and soldiers with semi-automatic weapons and what looked like grenades, which were the gas bombs, it looked like a battle zone.**
>
> Marcela Rodriguez,
> Executive Director, Enlace Chicago



From Left to Right: Christina Rudecki Ramirez, Impacted Chicago Resident; Marcela Rodriguez, Executive Director, Enlace Chicago

the city, but I believe in the Midwest. We work alongside families, organizations, elected officials, focused on education, mental health, community health, immigration, and safety.

And we also convene partners to collectively address the needs of the community. As Co-Chair of the Illinois Latino Agenda, I work alongside many other amazing leaders in uniting voices for advocacy, culture, and change, and we work collectively with a bold commitment to advocate for the needs of the Latino community and for equal representation and equitable investment.

What our Little Village families experienced during Operation Midway Blitz was severe disruption, unimaginable fear, uncertainty, and incredible levels of anxiety. What I share today is grounded in what we heard directly from our families, from our frontline staff, and from what we witnessed firsthand. I want to give you all a visual of the things that we saw on a daily basis, and strange and unimaginable things became the norm.

> **For the families in Little Village, immigration enforcement was not just a legal issue. It became a daily violation of their dignity, safety, and human rights.**
>
> Marcela Rodriguez

One morning, I had to be at the office early. It must have been around 6:30 AM. It was still dark, and I saw a car parked with both the passenger side door and the driver's side door wide open. I waited outside before entering the office to see. I imagined that someone had run back into their home, they forgot something. But I stood out there for 25 minutes, and nobody ever came. That became a normal thing in our community, cars that were there abandoned with nobody in sight. Our community, which if any of you have ever come to what we call 26th Street, is packed with traffic, cars, it's impossible to find parking, and restaurants and businesses are always full.

Our restaurants were empty. Our streets were a ghost town. And with the sounds of whistles on a daily basis, helicopters directly above our heads, crowds gathering, pushing ICE back and CBP, and soldiers with semi-automatic weapons and what looked like grenades, which were the gas bombs, it looked like a battle zone.

It looked like something, the images you see in a movie during war. We had cars speeding through our streets near schools. We saw many car accidents created by ICE and CBP speeding through our streets.

And our community did not go to work, our students did not go to school, our legal clinic had appointments that were canceled even though there were individuals that had cases with hopes to achieve some sort of stability, and our community health clinic had no-shows.

For the families in Little Village, immigration enforcement was not just a legal issue. It became a daily violation of their dignity, safety, and human rights. We quickly came together to think about ways, not just as Enlace, but as a collective of lots of partner organizations, elected officials, faith leaders, to come up with ways that we can support the community during these horrible times.

We launched a Roots of Resilience campaign where we were able to raise dollars to hire additional staff to provide mental health support both for our adults, our children, and our staff. We were able to give economic assistance to both small businesses and families that could not keep up with paying their rent, buying food, or getting the medications that they very much needed. It really was an unimaginable situation.

And yet, what this unfortunate series of events created was the heightened level of unity, caring for each other, standing shoulder to shoulder, being attacked, and efforts of supporting our neighbors. I genuinely believe that as a community and as people, we've been through a lot. The way we overcame the challenges of COVID, the challenges of other situations and crises, we will again recover.

We just need some time, and we needed to support — we need to support each other. I believe with all my heart that this administration may have chipped away at our peace, but I think they need to know that they did not come anywhere close to touching our spirit and who we are.

Christina Rudecki Ramirez

Good afternoon. My name is Christina Rudecki Ramirez, and I'm a United States citizen. In May of 2025, my husband and I were on our way to do a job in Detroit, Michigan, and because of one small wrong turn, my husband and I were stopped at the Windsor Border Patrol, and we were asked to get out of our car, and we went in to show our documents.

> **They detained my husband for more than five months, and I was detained for three days, being a US citizen, without being able to take a shower. I wasn't able to call my family.**
>
> Christina Rudecki Ramirez

Unfortunately, because they didn't believe us, and the documents that my husband showed — he showed his Social Security card, his ID, and his work permit. They detained both of us. They basically had lack of jurisdiction of us, so they detained my husband for more than five months, and I was detained for three days, being a U.S. citizen, without being able to take a shower, I wasn't able to call my family. I wasn't able to speak to my children, whom I love very much. I was not able to be in contact with anybody. And then my husband was told that we were going to — they were going to let him go, and unfortunately, they took him for over four and a half months. They kept him in a detention center.

And they didn't give him proper food. He was sleeping on a steel bench. They basically forced him to self-deport himself, which he now is in, in Zacatecas, Mexico. He's been there already since August. Yeah, I would say August of last year. Basically, he was granted a U visa,* and how they have my husband there is just totally unjust.

* A U visa provides a temporary immigration status, including work authorization, for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and cooperate with law enforcement or government officials in the investigation or prosecution of the criminal activity. Holders can apply for permanent residence after three continuous years in U status.

My husband should be allowed to come back to the United States, where he has a business with myself, and we should be able to live our lives properly without having to feel that we had our rights torn away from us and to have separation of families. Basically, what ICE has done to us is, and the Border Patrol, is that they're targeting immigrants and Latino families without having the proper documentation.

They're very aggressive to people. Me, myself, being a U.S. citizen, they totally took away my rights as a human being and a U.S. citizen. They separated us and forced us to have just — it just tore us to pieces of everything. My husband now being in Zacatecas, Mexico, I want to bring him back, and I'm going to do whatever I can to bring him back the right way, and I will fight till the end for him and do what is right.

I would say that the majority of Latino people, they're scared, and they shouldn't be. They're human beings, and they're wonderful people, and I'm, I'm proud to be married to a Mexican man. I'm very proud. And I just want everybody to know that I have wonderful family. I come from a family of educators. I was...I grew up on the south side of Chicago. I have a family of educators, and I don't think it's right what this world has done to the humanity of Latino people, and I'm here to stand up for their rights and to protect what's right and to bring my husband home.

Marty Castro:

Thank you, Mrs. Rudecki Ramirez. Mr. Carbajal?

Marcos Carbajal

Owner, Carnitas Uruapan

Good afternoon. My name is Marcos Carbajal. I'm the second generation owner of Carnitas Uruapan, a Mexican family-owned restaurant that has called Chicago home for 51years. My father opened our first location in Pilsen in 1975 after immigrating here from Mexico in the late 1960s. He built a business from nothing with hard work, good food, and a deep belief that putting down roots in a community could build something lasting.

> **We've watched neighborhoods change, we've weathered economic downturns, and we've always come back stronger. But nothing, nothing has shaken this business to its core the way that Operation Midway Blitz did.**
>
> **Marcos Carbajal, Owner, Carnitas Uruapan**

That belief has held true for over half a century now. We grew to a second location in Gage Park, and eventually to our third and flagship location on 26th Street in Little Village, a landmark building that took us years to renovate and that we now proudly call home. In 51 years, we've seen our communities go through a great deal.

We've watched neighborhoods change, we've weathered economic downturns, and we've always come back stronger. But nothing, nothing has shaken this business to its core the way that Operation Midway Blitz did. The last moment I can point to where things still felt normal was the first Sunday in September.

We were working one of our largest events of the year, a soccer match at SeatGeek Stadium for Chivas de Guadalajara versus Lyon. Stadium full of Latinos, families, people celebrating together. What we didn't know was that at that very same moment, a man named Leodegario Martinez Barradas was being arrested by federal agents in Archer Heights.

He was a flower vendor with no criminal record. His family was back home in Veracruz, Mexico. Within days, he was deported. He later wrote, "ICE is not deporting people with a criminal background. They're deporting those that dedicate their time to work." The Chicago Tribune reported that he's believed to be the first person detained and deported in Chicago under the title of Operation Midway Blitz.

That Sunday kicked off everything that followed. Things changed immediately. Customers called to ask if we could run food out to their car for fear of stopping. Families who came every Sunday for carnitas stopped coming. Everyone, including myself, was monitoring social media around the clock to warn staff and neighbors during their commutes of ICE activity.

This was not living freely in community. This was a community living in fear. This fear did not discriminate by immigration status. If you were Latino, you were a target for being stopped and harassed. That made me feel, for the very first time in my life, like a second-class citizen.

This was a community living in fear. This fear did not discriminate by immigration status. If you were Latino, you were a target for being stopped and harassed. That made me feel, for the very first time in my life, like a second-class citizen.

Marcos Carbajal, Owner, Carnitas Uruapan

Other parts of this city did not face this. Other ethnicities did not face this. It's a blatant violation of our civil rights, and it continues every single day. The economic consequences were real and measurable to us. Having three restaurants across three different neighborhoods gave me a unique vantage point. At the peak of the operation, our Little Village location saw a 40% drop in revenue and became unprofitable. 40%. Our Gage Park location dropped 25%. Our original Pilsen location, which has been there for 50 years, dropped 20%. Across three different neighborhoods, the numbers told the same story. When people are afraid, they stay home. The restaurant industry operates on thin margins in the best of times. There's very little room for error in this business, and drops of this magnitude sustained over weeks and months are not something most restaurants can absorb.

Many of us dipped into our personal savings just to keep the lights on and keep our employees paid and employed, and that's if you were lucky to stay open at all. Savings that represented years of hard work, years of sacrifice being drawn down will have real consequences for our families for years to come.

And there's something I want this panel to understand clearly. You cannot market against fear. There's no promotion, no discount, no outreach strategy that brings people out of their homes when they're afraid to be in public. The damage goes far beyond the immediate loss of revenue. Without knowing what the future holds, without any uncertainty that this won't happen again, we cannot confidently push ourselves to grow our business.

We can't sign leases, we can't buy additional real estate, confidently hire staff, or make investments that small businesses need to move forward and grow. The enforcement didn't just cost us revenue, it cost us our ability to plan for the future. The numbers of all of this matter, but the numbers are made of people.

I think about our workers afraid to come in, not because of anything they had done, but because of the color of their skin. On any given morning, they could be stopped, profiled, harassed, their car windows could be smashed, they could be dragged out of their vehicle in the street. That was the reality our workers lived every single day.

Across three different neighborhoods, the numbers told the same story. When people are afraid, they stay home. The restaurant industry operates on thin margins in the best of times. There's very little room for error in this business, and drops of this magnitude sustained over weeks and months are not something most restaurants can absorb.

Marcos Carbajal

I think about what it means to raise children in a neighborhood where you have to teach them to be afraid of federal law enforcement, not because they're criminals, not because they've done anything wrong, but because of who they are, where their family comes from, and the color of their skin. That is a weight no family should have to carry, and America is failing us when this is happening.

> **The enforcement didn't just cost us revenue, it cost us our ability to plan for the future. The numbers of all of this matter, but the numbers are made of people.**
>
> Marcos Carbajal

I'm not here to make a political argument. I'm here to tell you what I saw, what I experienced, and what the people of the neighborhoods where I operate my businesses experienced during this time. If the people who make policy decisions could stand on 26th Street, see the empty tables, the quiet streets, the fear in people's eyes, the way agents abuse their power, they would understand that enforcement carried out this way does not just affect those it targets, it affects everyone.

It affects entire communities. My family built Carnitas Uruapan because we believe in setting roots in the Latino communities that we're a part of. We're not going anywhere. The people of these communities are not a threat. They're workers, parents, neighbors, business owners, and oftentimes some of the hardest working people you're ever going to meet. They deserve to live without fear. They deserve to walk to their car, take their children to school, and come to a restaurant for Sunday lunch without wondering if today's the day their family gets torn apart.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I really hope this record matters. I hope this moment is not in vain.

We need real accountability and real consequences for the bad actors who made all of this possible, actions that were not long ago completely unthinkable in this country.

Marty Castro:

Thank you, Mr. Carbajal. Dr. Sedeño, please proceed.

Dr. Angela Sedeño

Executive Director, The Kedzie Center and The LOSAH Center of Hope, CEO, Expanded Mental Health Services of Chicago NFP (EMHS NFP)

> **The tactics used by ICE and CBP have caused pervasive fear and terror that no place is safe and no one is safe, that one could be separated from their loved ones at any moment. These are concerns expressed by second graders at one of our local schools in reference to violence inflicted by ICE and CBP.**
>
> Dr. Angela Sedeño, Clinical Psychologist,CEO of Expanded Mental Health Services of Chicago

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Angela Sedeño. I am a licensed clinical psychologist and CEO of Expanded Mental Health Services of Chicago, representing the 260,000 residents of Albany Park, Irving Park, North Park, Logan Square, Avondale, and Hermosa. The impact of Operation Midway Blitz has been far-reaching, affecting individuals of all ages.

Daily lives have been disrupted in our homes, schools, workplaces, and health clinics. Among the outcomes are separation of families, economic hardship, children being required to assume adult responsibilities for their parents, and persons not receiving the healthcare they need because they're afraid to leave their homes.



From Left to Right: Dr. Angela Sedeño, Executive Director, The Kedzie Center and The LOSAH Center of Hope, CEO, Expanded Mental Health Services of Chicago NFP (EMHS NFP), Marcos Carbajal, Carnitas Uruapan

The tactics used by ICE and CBP have caused pervasive fear and terror that no place is safe and no one is safe, that one could be separated from their loved ones at any moment. These are concerns expressed by second graders at one of our local schools in reference to violence inflicted by ICE and CBP, a conversation I found to be astounding among seven-year-old children.

Today, I lift the experiences of our children. These traumatic events have implications for long-term harm. As mental health providers, we bear witness to how the chronic fear shows up in our children, from anxiety to social withdrawal. Our teachers and caregivers have found it difficult to console and reassure the children.

> **Our children lack the ability to fully comprehend what is happening around them, and yet they are absorbing the fear and uncertainty.**
>
> Dr. Angela Sedeño

Overall, a majority of our clients report experiencing daily fear and exposure to use of force, as well as economic hardship and barriers to accessing resources. About 15% of our clients reported direct experiences with detention and family separation. Our youngest children, ages zero to six, have experienced increased separation anxiety, irritability, nightmares, clinginess, tantrums in response to the tension they feel around them. Our school-age children, ages seven to 12, experience anxiety, irritability, restlessness, nightmares, school refusal, social withdrawal, academic decline, and peer issues, including bullying from other students. Our children lack the ability to fully comprehend what is happening around them, and yet they are absorbing the fear and uncertainty.

One six-year-old child made online videos pleading for her father's return with promises to be good. Our teens and young adults report depression, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, hypervigilance, hopelessness, anger, and social withdrawal. They also describe increased responsibility for their families and financial worries.

> **One six-year-old child made online videos pleading for her father's return with promises to be good.**
>
> Dr. Angela Sedeño

Some of our teens became the primary financial provider and had to learn and navigate everything from the difference between cilantro and parsley to their siblings' educational and medical needs. They're overwhelmed and discouraged. Our adult clients and parents report fear of leaving their homes. Many report not leaving their homes for the duration of the operation.

A majority of our families experienced financial hardship with rent and food, and fear of accessing food and health resources for their US-born children. Many experienced severe panic attacks related to chronic fear of family separation, state violence, and the difficulty of emergency planning for their families.

> **On October 3rd, tear gas was deployed at the front door of our mental health clinic. Staff and clients were exposed to tear gas as they went to work and therapy. Neighbors, including elders with asthma and youth, ran for cover.**
>
> **Dr. Angela Sedeño**

Who would take their children if they were detained? Which children would stay, and which would go with their parents? Many families had no one with whom they could leave their children. Consequently, they presented with severe worry and distress, hopelessness, sleep disturbance, grief, and anxiety about talking to their children about possible outcomes.

Over these months, we had weekly virtual conversations regarding self-regulation in critical moments and how to prepare their children. The stress is palpable and felt by their teachers, providers, and helpers, and has called for increased services for our community providers. Our community providers have reported exhaustion and burnout related to high community needs that exceed resources, racial profiling, and distress related to family emergency planning.

Like our clinics, they report less in-person attendance and a reluctance to seek assistance. Our own team of clinicians report constant fear for their clients and themselves, high distress, helplessness, and depression. They note that many of their clients with trauma histories have been re-traumatized by the escalation of immigration enforcement, and experience an exacerbation of their PTSD symptoms.

> **Operation Midway Blitz caused relentless harm that will take years and likely generations to overcome.**
>
> **Dr. Angela Sedeño**

It has been difficult to restore a sense of safety for our clients and community members. On October 3rd, tear gas was deployed at the front door of our mental health clinic. Staff and clients were exposed to tear gas as they went to work and therapy. Neighbors, including elders with asthma and youth, ran for cover.

For subsequent months, we could not assure our clients that our location was safe. All of these assaults on our neighbors have exhausted our resources and strained the social fabric and threatened the wellness of our communities. The impact cannot be overstated, and we have yet to understand the implications of the chronic distress on our children, families, and communities.

We have a responsibility to our communities, but especially to the children, to protect and not harm them. Operation Midway Blitz caused relentless harm that will take years and likely generations to overcome. Thank you.

Marty Castro:

Thank you to our panelists. We do actually have time for one or two questions. Madam Chair. Dr. Sedeño, you clearly are still experiencing and the community you're serving is experiencing the trauma from Midway Blitz. There's still obviously activity going on. How is that exacerbating what was experienced? And what are you doing or what is being done in the mental health community to try to prepare for what might be next?

Dr. Angela Sedeño:

That's a great question. I think that we're definitely not prepared and that's something we all need to be thinking about. What we've seen is less people coming in person for services or waiting until they absolutely have to. We started seeing more people virtually again. We are showing up in the places that they're already at, so showing up at schools, and churches, and places where they feel safe.

> **What seems to be happening is people are reaching out in moments of panic, and when they're not, they're staying home and just taking care of themselves. It's unfortunate because I do think that we're going to see symptoms get worse – like, we're seeing people who are developing phobias about leaving home.**
>
> Dr. Angela Sedeño

What seems to be happening is people are reaching out in moments of panic, and when they're not, they're staying home and just taking care of themselves. It's unfortunate because I do think that we're going to see symptoms get worse — like, we're seeing people who are developing phobias about leaving home.

And so it'll just get exacerbated the longer this lasts.

Marty Castro:

Mr. Carbajal, could you talk to us a little bit more about the economic impact? I know you yourself have told us that your business lost you know, in Little Village over 40%. What's the improvement, if any, that you've seen? And, if you had one thing that you could recommend be done to support the business community. particularly small businesses like yours, what would that one thing be?

Marcos Carbajal:

It's a very slow recovery. The type of enforcement has changed, the tactics exchange have changed, but it's still happening. Our customer base is more plugged in than ever and knows exactly when there's activity, and you can see a cooling effect in the neighborhoods where it's happening. Even though it appears to be more targeted now, people still generally view the activity for days to come and avoid the areas.

> **The type of assistance we received during COVID was instrumental in keeping all of us afloat.**
>
> Marcos Carbajal

So it's not back to business as usual even though the agents have left. They haven't really left, even though the operation has ended. I would recommend as policy, really reaching here because the federal government wouldn't do this right now, but the type of assistance we received during COVID was instrumental in keeping all of us afloat. Whether it be a PPP loan based on the amount of revenue that we can show that we've lost and actual sustained losses backed by our numbers or employee retention credits the way that they were presented during COVID. Anything that can get us to embrace the uncertainty of opening a business, keeping a business open, without you having to be the backstop for it. And really, you know, putting yourself in a poor financial situation by choosing to keep fighting another day, not really knowing if there's going to be a continuation of this or another version of this.

Marcela Rodriguez:

What he said is 100% correct, but I believe that there's an opportunity. We often hear people talking about how 26th Street is the second revenue-generating corridor in the city, second to Michigan Avenue. A proposal we gave at the Illinois Accountability Commission was for our legislators to consider a reallocation of the tax revenue that is generated by the businesses and the families of the community to come back to the community to create an economic recovery fund.

A proposal we gave at the Illinois Accountability Commission was for our legislators to consider a reallocation of the tax revenue that is generated by the businesses and the families of the community to come back to the community to create an economic recovery fund.

Marcela Rodriguez

We, as nonprofit institutions, as business owners, are doing everything we can to raise dollars to provide economic support, but it is not enough. There's no way that we can actually help a business or a family come back from two, three, four, five months of economic instability. And so I think that there's a way where it doesn't require an additional tax, it just requires a small percentage of reallocation of revenue that's already being generated to be reinvested into the community that helps generate those dollars.

Marty Castro:

And that would be from the state level, right?

Marcela Rodriguez:

That's right. One of the things that I think just has been so apparent to me is what happened during COVID, the impact to mental health, to children, to your businesses. And it does not escape me that this is self-imposed, and that it is imposed by the federal government.

It was not about public safety. It was not about removing criminals from our streets. It was about tagging the communities that I believe they see as the biggest threat to their agenda – which is Mexican American communities, Latino communities.

Marcela Rodriguez

And I just want to highlight that point for folks at home that haven't really seen this issue in that way. But it sounds like you all would agree with me that this is significantly worse than what occurred during COVID — yes, because it's targeted. It's business as usual in every other part of town.

Marcos Carbajal:

I have a board position at the Illinois Restaurant Association, so I frequently meet with other restaurant owners across the city and across the state. And other people are expanding, business as usual. You know, you see it when we leave our communities, when we go downtown, when we go to other areas that are not Latino.

They are thriving. It's back to normal. So the nature of this, that it's a unique problem to us, you know, is not a coincidence, and that is the hardest part to deal with mentally. And I think it was clear, especially in communities like Little Village, Brighton Park, Cicero, that became targets, was because of the level of response that they saw from community.

And what we noticed very quickly is that these agents, clusters of agents, caravans of cars, traveled with cameramen. And so they were in our communities, wherever the most opposition they received became better footage for their propaganda. And there was footage. You see Little Village on many of their videos on their website, where they would come to agitate, to get a response, to paint us as violent, unhinged individuals, when really the violence and the unhinged-ness came from them.

> **... how it's also different from COVID is I think people are experiencing a sense of betrayal. There is a total loss of trust in your own government and your own country, and that's not going to be easily restored.**
>
> Marcela Rodriguez

They created that in our communities. And so I think that's what makes it so much worse. That it was planned. It was analyzed. They saw what communities generated most of the material that they were looking for. It was not about public safety. It was not about removing criminals from our streets. It was about tagging the communities that I believe they see as the biggest threat to their agenda — which is Mexican American communities, Latino communities.

Marty Castro:

Thank you so much, panelists. Oh, did you want to add something, Dr. Sedeño?

Dr. Angela Sedeño:

Yes, I was just going to add how it's also different from COVID is I think people are experiencing a sense of betrayal. There is a total loss of trust in your own government and your own country, and that's not going to be easily restored.

Marty Castro:

Thank you all. We appreciate your time, your testimony. Yes, thank you. We'll now transition to Panel 4B.



Audience members at People's Hearing in Chicago


Christopher Parente, Attorney for Marimar Martinez

PANEL 4B

Impacted Individuals and Families

Rochelle Garza:

This is about centering the voices of individuals and families who have experienced the impact of immigration enforcement here in Chicago and the Chicago area. Thank you all for being here and for courageously sharing these important stories. Panelists, again, you have six minutes.

There's a clock up here that will let you know when you should wrap up. And I'll go ahead and introduce the folks that we're going to hear from today: Christopher Parente, the attorney for Marimar Martinez; Adam Gonzalez, El Valor; John Doe, an impacted individual who will be testifying behind the screen to protect their privacy and identity; Susana, a small business owner, who also is operating under an alias; and Liliana Vargas, which is an alias for an impacted individual, impacted worker, who will also testify behind the privacy screen.

Okay, great. Thank you, panelists. We'll go ahead and start with you, Mr. Parente.

Christopher Parente

Attorney for Marimar Martinez

Thank you, and thank you for having me. My name is Chris Parente, and I am the attorney for Marimar Martinez. Marimar wanted to be here, but she is studying to get her full certificate to teach Montessori school, which is what she was doing before this all happened.

She's unavailable right now, but she will be watching this later. For those that don't know, Marimar is a 30-year-old U.S. citizen and a Montessori school teacher here in the Chicago area. She comes from a family of immigrants. On October 4th of 2025, it was a beautiful Saturday morning when she woke up and was on her way to donate clothes to her local church.

En route to the donation spot, she spotted an ICE vehicle in her neighborhood, which she recognized as the individuals that had been terrorizing her neighbors. So she deviated from her plan to go to the clothes

donation spot and followed the ICE vehicle, warning her neighbors, who again were out just doing yard work and typical Saturday morning things that people do in Chicago.

All she did was beep her horn and roll her window down, screaming, "La Migra, La Migra," again, just to warn her friends and neighbors about what was happening and what she had seen in her community in the past few weeks where ICE was acting unlawfully. And as she followed these agents, at one point, the ICE vehicle swerved into her vehicle.

Shortly after that, the government's case quickly started to fall apart, most likely because it was based on a series of lies that we were able to expose, the first being just this narrative of trying to brand this Montessori school teacher with no criminal history as a domestic terrorist.

Christopher Parente, Attorney for Marimar Martinez

She immediately panicked and stopped her vehicle. The ICE agent stopped his vehicle about five to ten feet ahead of her. The ICE agent jumped out of the vehicle, and within two seconds of opening his door, unloaded his service weapon five times, hitting her all five times, resulting in seven bullet holes into her body with exit and entry wounds. Marimar was able to drive away a few more blocks, where she called 911.

She reported the ICE shooting. An ambulance responded and took her to the hospital, where she was greeted by FBI agents who, despite her being shot five times, pulled her out of the hospital I think within two hours. She was brought back to FBI headquarters here in Chicago, where she was bleeding so profusely from the bandages that were just put on her that the agents recognized the danger to her life and had to take her back to a second hospital, where she was properly treated.

She stayed overnight, and from there she was brought here to the MCC in Chicago, and she was charged with assaulting a federal agent. Again, the claim was that she swerved into the agent and then she tried to drive over the agent. The next morning, I represented her in court, where the government sought to detain her despite being a 30-year-old U.S. citizen who was a Montessori school teacher with no criminal history.

They argued to the court that she was a danger to the community. She was proud that parents from her Montessori school had packed the courtroom and were there in support of her, and the judge took a few minutes to deny the government's request to detain her pretrial and released her. Shortly after that, she was indicted by the U.S. Attorney's Office and charged again with interfering with and impeding a federal agent.

Shortly after that, the government's case quickly started to fall apart, most likely because it was based on a series of lies that we were able to expose, the first being just this narrative of trying to brand this Montessori school teacher with no criminal history as a domestic terrorist. From the time of her arrest, they put this message out there on the internet, they put it in tweets by Trisha McLaughlin. Kash Patel, the FBI director tweeted out the wrong video and it's still out there, he's never taken it down, showing a different incident that was not Marimar.

We recovered text messages from the agents which are very troubling because they show the mindset of these ICE agents as they patrol our neighborhoods, essentially joking with other ICE agents about shooting Marimar.

Christopher Parente

They accused Marimar of being a doxer and they attributed a quote to her about calling for violence towards ICE agents, which she never did, and we got discovery that proved that was wrong. Again, they never retracted that. The agents claimed that they were boxed in and that's why they had to shoot her five times. We were able to obtain surveillance video that conclusively disproved that, which showed that the agents were lying about this situation, which again is why they ended up dismissing this case.

The agent was allowed to remove his vehicle, which is the main piece of evidence in the case, from FBI custody on the same day. He drove that vehicle back to Maine where he came from, and then he had the in-house Border Patrol mechanic buff out the damage, which prevented us from ever examining it to prove that it was the agent that hit her and not vice versa.

And we recovered text messages from the agents which are very troubling because they show the mindset of these ICE agents as they patrol our neighborhoods, essentially joking with other ICE agents about shooting Marimar, which is disgusting behavior from federal law enforcement in my opinion as a former federal prosecutor. There was an email from Greg Bovino directly to the agent who shot Marimar, whose name was Charles Exum. Agent Commander Bovino emailed Charles Exum within three hours of the shooting while Marimar was still in the hospital not knowing whether she would live or die.

So eventually, the U.S. Attorney's Office sees that this case is a disaster, that they were lied to, at least in my opinion, by ICE, and they dismissed the entire indictment with prejudice.

Christopher Parente

He is rewarding this agent, extending his retirement date and commending him for the great work he had done in Chicago, which presumably was the shooting of Marimar, which obviously there was no investigation of. So eventually, the U.S. Attorney's Office sees that this case is a disaster, that they were lied to, at least in my opinion, by ICE, and they dismissed the entire indictment with prejudice. We are now suing the government separately, but we are also trying to hold Agent Charles Exum accountable. I think his actions are unlawful. I think there were lies about what happened that day, and we are hoping that the U.S. Attorney's Office will take seriously their pledges to us to look into this and that one day he will be the defendant in a case brought by the Department of Justice.

Thank you. Thank you.

Adam Gonzalez

General Counsel , El Valor

Good afternoon. My name is Adam Gonzalez. I am General Counsel at El Valor, a Chicago nonprofit that has spent more than 50 years serving children, adults with disabilities, and immigrant families across Chicago. In this role, I helped prepare us for Operation Midway Blitz with Know Your Rights toolkits and emergency procedures for what to do if federal agents came to one of our daycares, group homes, or community centers.

I had responded to ICE before. I knew what to do, or so I thought. Nothing can prepare you for this happening at your child's daycare as parents are dropping off their babies.

Adam Gonzalez, General Counsel , El Valor

But today, I first speak to you as a father. At seven in the morning on November 5th, 2025, my world changed forever. My son Augie was only 18 months old. He had been going to Rayito de Sol for almost a year. Drop off could be difficult for us, but we had a ritual. We would sit in the back of the car, read a book, take selfies, play, whatever it took until he was smiling and ready for the day.

When I pulled into the parking lot that morning, something was off. A large black SUV was pinning a smaller car by the daycare entrance. I parked and tried to see what was happening. There was a commotion at the front door. That's when I saw ICE agents dragging someone out. I took out my phone and started recording.

A woman was screaming from the back of the SUV, "Let me go. Help me, please." Three armed masked federal agents shoved her in, indifferent to the parents yelling at them to let her go, indifferent to the babies being dropped off 10 feet away, and then they were gone.

I volunteer with Rapid Response Networks. I had responded to ICE before. I knew what to do, or so I thought. Nothing can prepare you for this happening at your child's daycare as parents are dropping off their babies.

> **I will never forget that day. I still have nightmares hearing the cries and screams from that morning. Showing up in force at a daycare is not a coincidence. That is a choice.**
>
> Adam Gonzalez

When I walked inside the daycare, I will never get over what I saw. Children crying, asking, "Are they going to deport us? Are they going to take us away? Why is everyone crying? Are we going to jail?" Three, four, and five-year-olds asking why their daycare was no longer safe, asking for their teachers, watching the adults in their lives have no answers for why their world had suddenly shattered.

Then I saw something I still cannot get over. Teachers coming out of hiding. They had sheltered with children as ICE chased Miss Diana into the daycare, terrified that ICE would take them or take a child. I never thought I would witness people hiding to avoid being kidnapped by their own government, especially at a daycare.

Then the realization settled in. Not everyone was safe. Lives change in less than 30 minutes. I will never forget that day. I still have nightmares hearing the cries and screams from that morning. Showing up in force at a daycare is not a coincidence. That is a choice, and at El Valor I see its consequences every day.

> **This administration has made a deliberate choice to make being Latino a crime. ... We deserve a system that protects working people from unchecked power, not one that protects unchecked power from working people.**
>
> Adam Gonzalez

When families fear leaving their home, children fall behind. Adults with disabilities lose the support that keeps them connected to the community. Parents cannot provide for their families, and our community falls into crisis. This administration has made a deliberate choice to make being Latino a crime.

We cannot take our children to daycare, give them an education, go to church, or go to work without fear. We deserve better. We deserve a system that protects working people from unchecked power, not one that protects unchecked power from working people. Thank you for your time.

John Doe:

Good afternoon, everybody. I would like to thank you all for being here this day and I also would like to thank God for the opportunity given of being in front of you. And I would like to give you a little testimony of all the things that I went through during this operation in the Chicago area.

So essentially what happened back in last September, it was just another day going to work. And even though I was aware of the situation because the whole thing I believe started happening in Chicago by August, I believe, if I'm not mistaken. So we heard on the news, and I actually had the chance to see some ICE agents nearby my neighborhood.

> **I'm assuming they were judging just on the color of my skin, and that was the main reason that I got pulled over.**
>
> John Doe

So yeah, I thought I was being careful and I kept my life the same way, you know, going to work in the morning, go back home at night. And that particular day I just went to work, and while I was going for lunch around noon, all of a sudden I got pulled over for this, what it seems to be — seems to be because they didn't have any labels on the doors or anything, just the lights — so looks like squad vehicles.

All the people that I was able to meet during these four months were hardworking people. And I met people from all over the world, China, India, you name it, Brazil, no criminal record.

John Doe

I got surrounded by them. It was like three vehicles. They came out of nowhere. I have no clue where they came from. But in a matter of seconds, they were knocking on my window asking for my identification and I showed them my driver's license. And while I was doing that, they open up my door, put me in handcuffs, and put me in one of those squad cars, no questions asked.

No, they didn't show me any order, any warning, nothing. Nothing signed by a judge or whatever. So when I asked them exactly what was that about, they told me, "You know what is this about. You know you are in the country illegally." So I don't know where they got the information from. I'm assuming they were judging just on the color of my skin, and that was the main reason that I got pulled over.

They were assuming that I was an undocumented person. So I kept asking this agent, let's say, because to me they were like bounty hunters. That's what they call them? Because he never identify himself as an agent, like as an ICE agent. So he kept saying, "Yes, we got an order. I'll show it to you in a minute."

But essentially all he did, he just grabbed my name from my driver's license, and he wrote it by hand on the top of a page. I didn't have the opportunity to read this page, but apparently that was the signed order by a judge, which I know wasn't true. So after that, after being detained, they took us to Broadview, which I believe is the name of this detention center in Chicago.

Yeah. They took us to this detention center in Chicago, and we stayed there for about 24 hours. They gathered all my information, and within 24 hours we were heading to the city of Baldwin, Michigan, where they kept me for four months. And in these four months, it was really, really hard.

First of all, because there was not such a thing as bonds. There was no bonds. There was nothing. These guys essentially the way they did this operation, they did so many things in a way where it was impossible for us to come up with a case. And I'm saying this because I have a citizen son, so my son couldn't help me.

That didn't help. I've been in the country for 26 years. I've been paying taxes for 20 years. I got no criminal record, and still, I had zero chances to get relief. So after two months there was a little hope about the Castañon-Nava, when the judge signed an order where it was about 600 people there.

We were detained without any order. So they were trying to give us this release with the Castañon-Nava order, but it didn't work that way either. They made an appeal on that, the judge's decision, so we stayed there more time. That was the only hope for all of us to get out of the detention center, and it didn't work like that.

And not only that, out of the 600 people on this list, I was on a special list. There was a special list with 15 guys, and I was on this list because I was a high risk. I don't know how they got this information or I don't know what's the criteria they're using to classify people. And not only that, at this detention center in Baldwin, the population is roughly 1,500.

And whoever wears a red uniform, that's people with a bad background, with a criminal record. Whoever wears blue, there's no criminal record. So how can you explain that out of a population of 1,500 there's only 100 people wearing red clothes? Meaning none of us had a criminal record whatsoever.

All the people that I was able to meet during these four months were hardworking people. And I met people from all over the world, China, India, you name it, Brazil, no criminal record. So I don't really understand what is the reason for the government to keep us locked up right there with no chances.

We all pay taxes. We have no criminal records. And I don't think it's working. Is it working? So we definitely need your help to change these laws, because this is a really, really unfair system. I hear a lot of people saying, like, "Abolish ICE." I'll say we might need ICE, but let's do things the right way.

We got a fair system for if you are a criminal, then yes, you need to leave this country. That was not my intention 26 years ago when I came from Mexico, when I came looking for a better life for my family. And I know I did a wrong thing by crossing the border illegally, but ever since I've been trying to be part of the community and pay taxes like they, the same way they want us to do, and I'm doing pretty much everything the same way a legit American citizen will do.

And I will appreciate it if you guys can help us change this, these laws or the way they act, because it is really unfair. Because of this situation I am in a really bad moment right now because I got no job. After six court dates, I was able to get out on a bond.

My first bond hearing was denied with no reason because they kept saying I was a flight risk. I do have a house, and like I mentioned before, I do have a citizen son. I had a steady job. I got a life right here. I am 49 years old right now, and I came when I was 26, so half of my life I've been here.

There's no reason for me to leave the country, and still they keep calling me a flight risk. And I got out with a bond after six courts, and they gave me a $10,000 bond, I'm sorry, when I qualify just like everybody else for a $1,500 bond, and still they gave me a $10,000 bond. And I got out, and I'm not able to work.

If I work, I'll be breaking one of the bond's restrictions, so that's going to get me in trouble. And I've been out for four months already, and I've been called for a check-in with ICE, and that'll happen on June 15th, so God knows what's going to happen, you know? I'm on fear again because now I got to go back and see these guys, and, whatever they... whatever happens to me is going to be on the officer criteria, whether I have to wear an ankle monitor like a criminal or download an app on my phone so they can keep track of me, or stay the way I am right now. So we really need you to please help us change these laws in a more fair way for everybody, not just for Hispanics or any specific community.



Audience members at People's Hearing in Chicago

This is an issue for many, many countries, but nobody... not too much people talk about it, right? We focus mainly, like, on the Hispanic community, but there's a lot of good people out there who deserve a better opportunity than what we got right now these days. Thank you very much.

Rochelle Garza:

The next person is Susana, the small business owner, and that's an alias. And keep your remarks to six minutes, please.

Susana

My name is Susana and for 35 years I have lived in the area of Pilsen and Little Village. I was a teaching artist with a community arts organization. I was able to meet many parents and I saw their struggles. And as a single mother myself, I understood what it meant to work hard and get your dreams going. After I finished teaching, I decided that I wanted to help my community in another way.

> **We can hear the whistles. We can hear the people just yelling and screaming to run, hiding, and it was so painful for me because it is such a devastating thing to see your community suffer so much.**
>
> Susana

I opened a business in massage therapy because I understood the struggles of pain, of bodily pain, of people working every day and not having any comfort, going to the doctor and getting a pill. I wanted to create a healing space that the community participates in. And it was all growing. It was all wonderful.

Everybody was coming from different neighborhoods around Little Village; Bridgeport, Pilsen, the Lawndale community were all participating. Once the raids started, my clients were afraid to come out. They would call me and cancel. They said that they were afraid. We had to lock our doors because they were in the surrounding area.

We can hear the whistles. We can hear the people just yelling and screaming to run, hiding, and it was so painful for me because it is such a devastating thing to see your community suffer so much, and try to survive every day to feed your children, to pay your rent. And I thought I was going to lose my business, but I was able to acquire some loans from friends and continue.

I want to build a community of healing. I want to build a community also where young students who have graduated from massage school can get other training and become better healers for our community. I am hoping that things will change soon and that we can support each other in giving our community what they need.

> **I have been part of many movements to help our community become stable, and it just seems that every time we put a brick, somebody knocks it down.**
>
> Susana

We need the support of everyone. We need to start speaking out more and stop being afraid. We have been struggling. Since I was a teenager, I have been struggling with the racism. I have been part of many movements to help our community become stable, and it just seems that every time we put a brick, somebody knocks it down.

Every time we try to build something, they want to break it down, and I'm tired of being broken. I will not be broken anymore, and I will continue this struggle to my death. So please, everyone stand up and stop being afraid. I will continue until I die.

Liliana Vargas:

Buenas tardes. Gracias por invitarme a esta importante audiencia. Soy una mujer luchadora que no tengo miedo de hablar para defender mis derechos. Pero en esta administración conocida por represalias, hoy no voy a decir mi nombre real. Y no es porque tenga miedo, sino porque sabemos que somos atacados todas aquellas personas que alzamos nuestra voz para exigir nuestros derechos como seres humanos.

Tengo veinticinco años viviendo en Chicago, en los Estados Unidos, el cual considero que es mi país. Vivo aquí, trabajo aquí, pago impuestos, aquí tengo mi familia, he forjado y echado raíces, por lo cual considero que es mi país.

Liliana Vargas

Soy esposa, madre, trabajadora y orgullosamente de ser miembro de Arise Chicago. Tengo veinticinco años viviendo en Chicago, en los Estados Unidos, el cual considero que es mi país. Vivo aquí, trabajo aquí, pago impuestos, aquí tengo mi familia, he forjado y echado raíces, por lo cual considero que es mi país. Yo trabajo en un restaurante, tengo diecisiete años laborando en el mismo lugar. El trabajo es pesado, muy pesado. Hacemos de todo, nos ponemos a, a limpiar, preparamos comida, servimos clientes, termina la jornada y continuamos haciendo limpieza hasta cerrar. No trabajo porque yo me sienta feliz, yo sé que lo hago, pero también sé que el trabajo es más pesado cuando somos atacados y aun así tenemos que trabajar, tengo que pagar bills, tengo que comer, tengo que pagar los bills de hospitales.

No es solo el trabajo que es pesado, sino el trato que nos dan como trabajadores. Hemos sufrido represalias cuando defendemos nuestros derechos o pedimos aumento de sueldo. La verdad es que hay muchos problemas y siempre los ha habido, eh, durante el trabajo. Pero ahora con esta administración, con este Midway Blitz, ha sido peor, porque sentimos que no podemos hablar, nos sentimos atemorizados al poder expresarnos y al exigir un beneficio para nuestro persona. Hemos tenido muchos problemas, violaciones de la ley, días de enfermedad, limitaciones para usar el baño, nos controlan el tiempo para poder ir al baño. No nos permiten llevar nuestra propia agua. Quieren que usemos el agua de la llave, el cual sabemos que no es favorable para nuestra salud.

Por lo menos antes, como grupo nos uníamos y nos sentíamos con valor de poder exigir, nuestros derechos o pedir un aumento de sueldo, pero ahora hay mucho temor en, en los trabajadores. Por mi parte, yo conozco mis derechos y yo sé que conmigo no, no se meten porque saben que yo sé defenderme.

Pero veo el miedo en los ojos de mis compañeros, especialmente aquellas personas que acaban de llegar como refugiados. El que tiene menos, menos tiempo en este país son maltratados, son más vulnerables porque no conocen sus derechos. No saben que tienen derecho a días de enfermedad, que tienen derecho a tomar su hora de lonche o que pueden ir al baño las veces que ellos sea necesario.

La economía es muy dura en estos momentos, pero sabemos que, que tenemos que trabajar. Sabemos que hay miedo porque hay mucha migra. Y los patrones saben esto. Están usando este miedo para nosotros como migrantes, ya que, esta administración les da el poder de exigirnos a nosotros seguir trabajando y no alzar nuestra voz.

Siento que los patrones tienen menos, vergüenza, se podría decir, y piensan que tienen el derecho de usarnos como trabajadores. Como dije, no tengo miedo de mis patrones, pero sí estoy preocupada de la

Pero ahora mi hijo me dice: "Mami, no sé por qué venimos a este país, por qué me trajiste. Si a pesar de que tengo mi carrera, no puedo, no me siento libre, no me siento contento. Nos sentimos perseguidos, señalados por ser hispanos."

Liliana Vargas

migra. Toda, toda mi familia y yo, mi esposo y mis hijos, no nos sentimos seguros. Durante esta administración de Midway Blitz, la migra secuestró a mi cuñado. Desde este tiempo, toda nuestra familia usamos una aplicación de ubicación. Sentimos que no podemos mudarnos libremente aquí en nuestro país y claro que extrañamos mucho a mi cuñado. Su esposa y su hija de nueve años quedaron solos, vulnerables. Es triste ver a mi, a mi sobrina crecer sin su papá.

Es la única hija y sé que, que ella-- su papá era su fuerte, pues es su única hija y ahora no está. Cuando mi esposo-- vamos a ver la casa, le dice: "Tío, ¿cuándo va a venir mi papá?." Y mi esposo no le puede decir nada. Simplemente, le dice: "Mija, no sé, pero tienes que ser fuerte y salir adelante, pues estás sola con tu mamá."

Salimos y nos sentimos atemorizados, aterrorizados, porque solamente estamos a la, al acecho, ver qué cosa hay atrás de nosotros, porque no sabemos en qué momento nos va a tocar. ... Solamente queremos trabajar, queremos que se nos respete, que nos reconozcan como seres humanos y que también sepan que nosotros somos contribuyentes para este país.

Liliana Vargas

Durante el secuestro de mi cuñado fue muy difícil, pues estuvo cuatro meses encerrado en Mississippi. Nos hablaba y nos decía: "Cuídense mucho, porque estar aquí es un infierno. Mucha gente llega sucios, mojados. Son trabajadores, no son criminales." Y si esa gente que solamente viene a trabajar nos tratan de esa manera, ¿qué podemos esperar de los que en realidad son criminales?

Nosotros solo somos trabajadores. Nuestro único error y pecado fue venir a este país pensando darles un mejor futuro a nuestros hijos. Yo soy madre de dos hijos. Mi niña tenía tres años, mi hijo cinco cuando vine a este país. Pero yo vine con la ilusión de poder darles una carrera. Y sí se las di con mucho esfuerzo. Trabajamos dos turnos mi esposo y yo para no depender del gobierno ni de beca. Nos costó mucho, mucho trabajo, pero mi hijo se graduó y mi hija también. Pero ahora mi hijo me dice: "Mami, no sé por qué venimos a este país, por qué me trajiste. Si a pesar de que tengo mi carrera, no puedo, no me siento libre, no me siento contento. Nos sentimos perseguidos, señalados por ser hispanos."

Pero sé que tenemos que luchar y seguir adelante. Mis hijos son DACA y están sufriendo lo mismo que todos los que estamos acá, porque no saben qué va a pasar con ellos. Solo tengo que darles una esperanza y no dejar que ellos se caigan.

Siento que no vivo en esta misma ciudad como antes. Antes me sentía libre, salíamos como familia, podíamos ir libremente a un concierto o simplemente a, al centro a visitar como familia. Ahora, ahora no. Ahora no podemos hacer nada de eso, porque salimos y nos sentimos atemorizados, aterrorizados, porque solamente estamos a la, al acecho, ver qué cosa hay atrás de nosotros, porque no sabemos en qué momento nos va a tocar.

Si ya tenemos una persona afuera y solamente está mi esposo, tenemos que cuidarnos. Tenemos, pero tenemos que seguir luchando, porque yo trabajo aquí, pago taxes y cuando yo pago mis taxes no me dicen si soy o no soy con papeles. Ahí sí no ve nada de eso. Pero nosotros venimos a luchar. Solamente queremos trabajar, queremos que se nos respete, que nos reconozcan como seres humanos y que también sepan que nosotros somos contribuyentes para este país. Trabajamos mucho y gracias a todo lo, la mano de obra barata, porque eso es lo que somos, somos un número barato y tenemos que seguir trabajando. Y todos los ricos tienen lo que tienen gracias a la mano barata del inmigrante.

Pero no vamos a dejarnos, eh, eh, atacar sin nosotros responder. Sabemos que los patrones, los ricos, sí están, eh, eh, enriqueciéndose más, pero no nos vamos a dejar. Vamos a seguir organizándonos y sé que juntos vamos a salir adelante. Gracias

Liliana Vargas: English translation:

Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to this important hearing. I'm a brave woman and I don't have a fear to speak out and to defend my rights. But with this administration that is known for retaliation, I'm not going to use my real name. I am a person that speaks out to demand her rights and to be treated as a human being.

I'm a wife, a mother, I'm a hard worker, and I'm a proud member of Arise Chicago. I have been living in Chicago for 25 years, in the United States. That is my country. I live here, I work here, I pay my taxes here, I have my family here, I have built and put down roots, therefore, I consider this my country.

> **And now, even though my son has a career, sometimes he tells me, "Why are we here? I mean, I have a career, but I am not happy. I don't feel free. We are being persecuted, targeted because we are Hispanics."**
>
> Liliana Vargas

I work in a restaurant. I've been working there for 17 years. My work is hard, is very hard. We have to do everything. We have to clean, we have to prepare the food, we have to take care of the clients, everything. And at the end of the day, we have to clean before we close. I do not work because I'm happy. I work because I have a family. I have to pay bills, I have to eat, I have to pay for all the hospital bills that I have. It's not only the job that is hard, it's the treatment that we get as workers. We have suffered retaliation when we fight for our rights or when we ask for a pay raise. The truth is that we have always had problems at work, and now with this administration, it has been worse, because we feel that we cannot talk.

We feel intimidated to express ourselves or to be able to demand a benefit for us. We have had a lot of problems, violations of the law with the sick days, limitations to go to the bathroom because they want to control our time that we use to go to the bathroom. We cannot bring our own water to work. They want us to drink the water from the faucet, which we all know is not good for our health.

At least in a group, we feel that we are empowered to defend ourselves and to ask for better conditions and more respect. But now there's a lot of fear among the workers. And I know my rights, so the bosses don't mess with me.

I know how to defend myself, but I can see the fear in the eyes of my coworkers, especially those who have just arrived as refugees. Because the ones that are new here, they are mistreated, they are more vulnerable because they don't know their rights. They don't know that they have the right to sick days, the right to a lunch break, or the right to go to the bathroom as often as they need.

The economy is very tough right now, but we know we have to work. We know there's fear because there are so many immigrants. And employers know this. They're using this fear against us as immigrants, since this administration is giving them the power to demand that we keep working and not raise our voices.

I feel that the bosses have no shame, and they think that they have the right to abuse their workers. Like I said, I'm not afraid of my bosses, but I am worried about La Migra, the Border Patrol, all my family, myself, my husband, my kids.

> **I work here, I pay taxes, and when I pay my taxes, they don't ask me if I have papers or not. They don't care about any of that. ... We only want to work, we want to be respected, to be recognized as human beings, and for them to understand that we are also contributors to this country.**
>
> Liliana Vargas

And during Operation Midway Blitz, Border Patrol kidnapped my brother-in-law, and all that time, all the members in my family used a location app because we feel that we cannot move around freely here in our country. And of course, we miss my brother-in-law a lot, and his wife and his daughter that is nine years old are alone.

They're vulnerable. We help them in whatever we can financially, but it's hard to see my niece grow up without a father. And then sometimes she asks my husband, "Uncle, when is my daddy coming?" So he's gotta say, "Be strong. It's only you and your mother." I feel that I don't live in the same city like before because now I have to take my time and be cautious because I don't feel free.

I feel persecuted, like someone is always after me. And my brother-in-law was four months in Mississippi, and he said, "Be careful. This is hell. Some people come here and they're dirty, they're wet, but I cannot leave my work." I am, I'm afraid, but I cannot stay home. We go out with fear, yes, but we go. And this attack is direct. But we're not going to let them attack without not having an answer, and we're going to keep on going.

And sometimes, because I came here when my daughter was three years old and my son was five years old, and my husband and I worked two shifts. And now, even though my son has a career, sometimes he tells me, "Why are we here? I mean, I have a career, but I am not happy. I don't feel free. We are being persecuted, targeted because we are Hispanics." I want you to know that both of my kids have DACA, but we cannot lose hope, and together we are going to keep on going.

I feel that I don't live in the same city. I felt free before, we would go out as a family, we could go freely to a concert or simply go visit the city center as a family. Now, we cannot. Now, we cannot do any of that, because when we go out, we feel terrified, we feel hunted, constantly looking over our shoulders to see what's behind us, because we don't know at what moment it's going to be our time.

If we already have one person in detention and it's just my husband and I, we have to take care of ourselves. We have to, but we must continue fighting because I work here, I pay taxes, and when I pay my taxes, they don't ask me if I have papers or not. They don't care about any of that. But we're here to fight. We only want to work, we want to be respected, to be recognized as human beings, and for them to understand that we are also contributors to this country. We work a lot, and thanks to all the cheap labor, because that's what we are, we are cheap numbers, and we have to keep working. And all the wealthy people have what they have because of the cheap labor of immigrants.

But we are not going to let ourselves be attacked without responding. We know that the bosses, the rich, are getting richer, but we will not let that happen. We will continue organizing ourselves, and I know that together we will move forward. Thank you.

Rochelle Garza:

I just want to thank all the panelists for being here today. Thank you for sharing your stories. We may have time for just one question. It's kind of hard to pick what question to ask. But Mr. Parente, what we saw in the news and what happened to Marimar Martinez, with her being criminally prosecuted as a means of covering up what happened, was just such a shock to me, and all I could think about was, "What comes next for her?"

> **All I can think about for each of the folks that have testified today. What comes next? What is the other side of the pain that has been inflicted?**
>
> Rochelle Garza

And that's all I can think about for each of the folks that have testified today. What comes next? What is the other side of the pain that has been inflicted? How much more has this impacted Marimar's life? Is

she having to expunge her criminal record? I mean, what does this look like for her long-term, in terms of her recovery?

Just if you would share a little bit more specific to her. And if Adam, if you would like to share personally for you, what comes next.

Christopher Parente:

Yes. I think first you know from just speaking with Marimar over the last few months, it's the mental part of this, right.

Every morning she wakes up, and she said she looks in the mirror, and I mean, she has holes in her body that will never go away. And, and it's that trauma, plus knowing that her own government not only did this to her but then has branded her forever on social media and the internet as a domestic terrorist.

> **There will be a time in this country when people realize the shamefulness of our government's conduct at this time, and I want the truth to be documented so that our kids and their kids will see that the truth will win overall.**
>
> Christopher Parente

And we've been fighting with DHS and the U.S. Attorney's office to get DHS to take these things down, and they just won't back down, right. They won't remove inaccurate press releases and tweets and everything else that this administration uses to demonize people and shape a false narrative.

You know, from the beginning, they said that Marimar rammed the agents. I got to cross-examine the agent at issue here, Charles Exum, and he admitted on the stand that she never rammed them. And even still, DHS won't retract those press releases. We're dealing with an administration that just does not seem to care about the truth, and they think that if they just keep repeating lies, that eventually, people will believe them.

And unfortunately, that's true, which is why I think town hall meetings and things like this are so important to document what's going on now. Because there will be a time in this country when people realize the



Audience members at People's Hearing in Chicago

shamefulness of our government's conduct at this time, and I want the truth to be documented so that our kids and their kids will see that the truth will win overall.

But it's going to be a long road for Marimar. Like I said, we're going to ... we filed a Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) claim.†‡ We're going to sue them, the government, here in federal court. And you know, I've been in the U.S. Attorney's office weekly to get charges brought against Charles Exum, and I think one day we will, whether it's in this administration or the next.

Adam Gonzalez:

To what was said, I think one of the most important things we can do is tell our stories and advocate to make sure that everyone knows the truth.

I think one of the most important things we can do is tell our stories and advocate to make sure that everyone knows the truth.

Adam Gonzalez

I know this administration, after this happened, lied about what happened. They said it was a routine stop. They did not want to go into how they chased her into a daycare. Many parents had videos. Many parents had stories of what happened. It was put in the media, and when they were confronted, they finally backed down.

So when the narrative has enough behind it, when there are enough people who go out of their way to record these things, when there are enough people who speak up, they can change, and they will change. And I think that's what we have to do as the next steps, is never forget that we do have power. We have our voices.

With social media, we can amplify much faster than ever before, and I think we just have to have that courage to not back away when things get hard, to not back down, because they will intimidate us. They will try to stop us from speaking out, and the best thing we can do is to speak out, to advocate, to make sure that we go to places like this and know that this did happen, this was real.

Marty Castro:

The question that you asked, Madam Chair, and the response that Mr. Parente gave made me think of something. It's not so much a question, but I'd be interested in your thoughts on this. Your client in particular is a victim of literally the weaponization of government. And we've seen in the last few days the federal government has created this fund, the Weaponization Fund.

I wonder what would happen if all those individuals who have been victimized by the government as part of these operations, these enforcement operations, went ahead and submitted claims to that fund and sought their day of justice and sought to flood that fund for people who have really been victimized by our government.

Christopher Parente:

We've thought about that, and we will do it. I mean, we all know what'll happen when we do it. But you know, there's that. I represent a defendant in the Broadview Six case that's falling apart as well for the government. And once that's done, I think we'll file a claim on their behalf as well.

‡ The Federal Tort Claims Act is a 1946 U.S. law that allows people to sue the federal government in federal court for injury, property loss, or death caused by the negligence of a government employee.

But you know, again, I used to work at the U.S. attorney's office for 15 years as a federal prosecutor. I was in DOJ. To me, it's just destroying everything that I believed in and, and worked with. And look, there are plenty of good agents out there. There're good ICE agents, there're good FBI agents, there're good ATF agents. In fact, the majority are. I don't know what has gone on in this culture right now where they're rewarding the wrong people. They're promoting Charles Exum three hours after he shoots a woman, without any investigation. That's not the Department of Justice I worked for.

Rochelle Garza:

Thank you, thank you again for your comments. Thank you to all of our panelists who participated today. We're closing out the end of a very long day where we heard a lot of testimony. I want to thank the audience members for being here, for listening, for feeling what has happened.

I know that this has brought up a lot of emotions in a lot of us, including myself. And I think that it is a reflection of the love and belief that we have in the promise of this country. We're here because we want to document the truth, because the truth is powerful. You know, we need to tell the story.

We need to be honest about what happened so it doesn't repeat itself, right? There is an assault on the truth, and we are combating that. This hearing is about combating that. The hearings that we've had before, that we're going to have into the future are about combating that. And it is about centering the impacted individuals, which you know, for most cases currently it is Latinos that have been racially profiled and targeted, especially following the Noem v. Perdomo case and the Kavanaugh stops that have resulted following the Supreme Court's decision in September. I'm here as Chair of the Commission. This is not an official hearing by the Commission on Civil Rights, but my plan is to take this back to the Commission to continue pushing for us to look at this issue.

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus has asked the Commission on Civil Rights to look at racial profiling and the impact on Latinos across the country. That request is still pending, and I hope to share this with my fellow commissioners. Even though we have differing views on this issue, I hope that we can come together and address the most pressing civil rights issue of our lifetime.

So with that, Marty, do you have some last comments?



Audience members at People's Hearing in Chicago



People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement In Chicago

Marty Castro:

Just very, very briefly. Today we heard stories of resistance, stories of resilience, and powerful stories, but painful stories. And while the Latino community is at the epicenter of this, I think we heard today from the Asian community, the Muslim community, the African immigrant community, that this affects them too, and so many other communities that couldn't be here today.

When I heard Susana say that she was tired of being broke, it reminded me that it's easy to break a branch when it's by itself. But when you bundle us together, we create something that can't be broken, something that cannot be bent. We together, experiencing these challenges and responding to these challenges together, we are mightier than a branch.

We are mightier than a 1,000-year red oak, because only together will we get through this. And don't doubt — even though we heard a lot of very heavy and dark things today, truthful things, do not lose hope. At the end of the day, we will get through this because we've gotten through this before. We will get through this, and we're going to rebuild this country because we built this country in the first place.

And no matter how many of us they deport, no matter how many of us they threaten, no matter how many of us they try to denaturalize, it's too late. Morality is on our side, justice is on our side, and demographics. They're not going to change what this country is going to be and what it is now and in the future because we already won that.

But we are going to continue the fight until we find opportunities to repair and restore and rebuild.

Thank you.

To view the People's Hearing on Immigration Enforcement, Chicago Region, go to:
hispanicfederation.org/chicagohearing

For a digital copy of this report, go to:
hispanicfederation.org/chicagorecord