

To the Judiciary Committees:

I am writing in response to your request for testimony about the ICE raid on March 11 in South Burlington. I have lived in Vermont for 45 years and my children attended Burlington public schools. I currently live in Worcester VT and am the Chair of the Sociology Department at UVM.

While I was not at the site of the raid, I have read all of the media coverage about the events in South Burlington and the subsequent court hearings. I feel strongly that our Vermont resources, financial and human, should NOT be wasted in assisting ICE in its efforts to criminalize immigrants and immigration. The actions taken on March 11th were in violation of Vermont's Fair and Impartial Policing Policy, and are evidence for the need to take stronger steps to ensure that our resources are used for the well-being of Vermonters. Enacting a "Sanctuary State" statute similar to California's SB 54 (also known as the California Values Act) would guarantee that the tax dollars of hard-working Vermonters are used on issues such as education, housing, health care, public transportation, protecting our natural resources, and investing in renewal energy - services that actually benefit the residents of the state. The reasons I support this are listed below.

- 1. The actions of ICE on March 11th were in violation of the U.S. Constitution and the Vermont Constitution.** During the raid on Dorset Street, ICE agents *with the support of local and state law enforcement agents* arrested three residents of the house who were not charged with crimes and were not named in the warrant. This is a clear violation of the Constitutional protection from unreasonable search and seizure. Furthermore, according to Article 5 of the Vermont Constitution, police in the state of Vermont should be governed by Vermont institutions, not federal agents.
- 2. The actions of the Vermont State Police and the Burlington and South Burlington police departments violated their own mission statements as well as the Fair and Impartial Policing Policy.** While ICE had a warrant to search the house on Dorset Street, they did not have a warrant to arrest the residents – the only person named in the warrant was not there. The only reason to detain the three residents of the house was due to their skin color and native language, which are NOT reasonable cause for arrest. This is biased

and prejudiced policing, which violates the statewide policy as well as the core values of trust and integrity which VSP, SBPD, and BPD claim to uphold. By collaborating with ICE, these police departments reduce community trust in their integrity, thereby reducing their ability to keep Vermonters safe.

- 3. Valuable resources were diverted from meeting the needs of Vermonters and used instead to weaken community trust in law enforcement.** This operation was not a good use of our tax dollars. Vermont has plenty of problems in public safety that require police involvement, and plenty of other areas where our resources should be invested such as affordable housing, education, and substance abuse. While these officers spent many hours on Dorset Street, they could have been addressing actual crimes occurring in the state – did all of those officers have nothing more pressing to do on March 11th? And the expenses continue to add up; more of our tax dollars will be spent dealing with the aftermath of the event with hearings, investigations, legal defense, etc. The best way for Vermont law enforcement to keep the state safe is to REFUSE TO COLLABORATE with ICE. For those who claim they were helping serve a criminal arrest warrant: that is NOT what happened – they abducted people from their home with NO REASONABLE CAUSE. This is racist and illegal.
- 4. Immigrants are essential to the functioning of the Vermont economy.** Vermont law enforcement should be focused on protecting Vermonters, including those who are immigrants, refugees, and asylees. As Governor Scott has mentioned many times, Vermont’s population is shrinking and aging, and immigrants are essential workers in agriculture, construction, health care, retail, and literally every sector of the Vermont economy. It is up to the state legislature to provide laws that improve the well-being of the state, and protection of immigrant workers is a key element of your responsibility in this area.
- 5. A state statute has more teeth to protect Vermont communities than an unenforceable policy.** A Sanctuary State statute modeled after California’s SB 54 would ensure that there is no confusion in police departments across the state about their legal obligations. It

would make collaboration with ICE against the law and hold Vermont agencies accountable to the state. It is clear to any reasonable person that the attack on immigrants happening in this country is expensive, illegal, and immoral. It is the responsibility of the legislature to protect Vermont values and principles with a statute that clearly excludes enforcement of immigration policies from the duties of Vermont law enforcement agencies.

6. Vermont communities do not want ICE activity in our state.

Wherever ICE has appeared in our state, the community has protested. Vermonters have put themselves at risk to protest ICE detentions; we have rallied for freedom at court hearings of detainees; we have marched in the streets, given testimony at city council meetings, and spoken to our legislators in opposition to ICE activities in Vermont. We value our immigrant neighbors who enrich our communities and bring energy and diversity to our state.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage the state legislature to introduce next session a bill to establish Vermont as a sanctuary state where our state tax dollars will not be spent on immigration enforcement but will be used to improve the lives of Vermont residents. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Strickler