

THE HUMAN TOLL OF SANCTUARY POLICIES: STORIES FROM VICTIMS AND FAMILIES

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026

Serial No. 119-63

Printed for the use of the Committee on the Judiciary



Available via: <http://judiciary.house.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

WASHINGTON : 2026

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THE HUMAN TOLL OF SANCTUARY POLICIES: STORIES FROM VICTIMS AND FAMILIES

Thursday, April 16, 2026

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Washington, DC

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in Room 2141, Rayburn House Office Building, the Hon. Jefferson Van Drew [Chair of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Members present: Representatives Van Drew, Jordan, Onder, Schmidt, Gill, Crockett, Raskin, and Johnson.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you all for being here today. This is a regular meeting of the Subcommittee on Oversight. The women sitting in front of us today, you shouldn't have to be here. You shouldn't have to have a hearing on this topic. What you should have, and we can't do, is to have your children back. The systems of governing across this country have failed you, so you are here and, damn it, we are going to listen to you.

Folks have said on the other side sometimes a lot of things in defense of sanctuary city policies. I say tell that to Laura Wilkerson, whose 18-year-old son Joshua was murdered by an illegal alien from Belize. He was beaten with a wooden rod. His hands and feet were bound. His body was set on fire and I'm sorry I even have to say this, and he was left in a field. Joshua gave his killer a ride home from school that day. That was Joshua's crime. That is the kind of kid that he was.

Tell it to Patricia Fox, whose daughter, Carissa, was riding on the back of a motorcycle when an illegal alien with no license and no insurance cut across three lanes of traffic and hit her, and then he fled the scene and left her for dead.

Tell that to Jen Heiling, whose son, Brady, 19 years old, a football and track athlete, who would turn down college scholarships just to stay close to his family and his girlfriend, was killed, was murdered when a drunk illegal alien drove the wrong way on an interstate at a blood alcohol level just about three times the legal limit.

Go ahead, tell them sanctuary policies make communities safer. Look them in the eye and say that. Tell them that blindly letting in millions of unknown people into this country makes us safer. It

doesn't. We know it. It doesn't. I know all of you know it; yet here we are. This is a direct, documented, undeniable line between the policy choices that have directly led to the deaths of innocent Americans.

In New York, failure to honor ICE detainees resulted in the release of 6,947 criminal illegal aliens, criminal illegal aliens, almost 7,000, with crimes ranging from 29 homicides, 2,500 assaults, 200 burglaries, 300 robberies, 400 dangerous drug offenses, 300 weapons offenses, and 200 sexual predatory offenses. In Illinois, they had the man who shot and killed Sheridan Gorman, an 18-year-old freshman, walk in a park with her friends in custody, but they let him go. We know because this Committee obtained the Border Patrol documents, when Jose Medina crossed into this country, he made no asylum claim, and agents determined he was unlikely to run away, and look what he did. The Biden Administration released him anyway, into our communities, onto our streets, and into the park where Sheridan Gorman was walking with her friends.

These same sanctuary policies protected the man who killed Katie Abraham, an Ohio University student, who was sitting at a car, stopped at a red light, when a drunk illegal alien who had already been deported once before slammed into her at 78 miles an hour and left the scene. He was driving on a fake identity with fake documents under a fake name. He had gone to three different bars that night.

Sanctuary policies protected the man who killed Richard Williams he is a senior, too an 83-year-old veteran, an Air Force veteran, who was standing on a subway platform, not bothering anybody, who served his country, when Mr. Hernandez, a Honduran national who had been deported from this country four times with 15 prior criminal charges—15, how many times does it take for us to learn? He came up behind him, and he shoved them on the tracks.

They call these policies sanctuary to make them sound nice. Well, I will let you know what I call it. I call it negligence. I call it a dereliction of our duty to protect the American people that we serve. When your policies repeatedly release dangerous criminals who go on to kill innocent Americans over and over again, and you do it knowingly, and I don't mean to be harsh but the only thing, the only word I can think of is murder.

An ICE detainer doesn't ask for much: Hold a person who has committed a crime for 48 hours so Federal agents can take them into custody. Two days. That's all they asked. These Governors and these mayors and these officials were all sitting in our comfortable offices and our ivory towers, continuing to ignore the duty and ignore the safety of their constituents. It continues to lead to one tragedy after another.

We have had too many different types of hearings on this, and yet it continues. That is why I applaud all of you when we talked in the back, that you have the guts, that you have the strength, that you have the love in your heart for those that you lost, and the love in your heart to try to help other Americans, and to try to change the system.

You asked me back there do the good guys win? Not all the time; but damn it, it is worth the effort and you have got to try to win. This is worth the effort that you all are making. I mean it. I thank you.

That's why I called this hearing. Not for shrewd arguments, not for talking points, not for technicalities, and not for all the legal words and the legalese. It is just a hearing for people. I wanted to hear from real people. I didn't want to hear from, and we put plenty of attorneys up there, too; I'm not being critical, Mr. Romanucci, but I wanted to hear from the American people who have been hurt and want to make a difference. I called this hearing. I called it for Joshua. I called this hearing for Carissa. I called this hearing for Brady. I called this hearing for Hallie, Sheridan and Katie, and Richard and Stephanie. Do you want me to read all the names? I don't think you do because it hurts.

These are real people and they are real tragedies, real pain and real hurt. You know what? Condolences don't do it. Feeling sorry doesn't do it. The words don't do it. Speeches like the speech I am giving now, it can't suffice. It can't do it. I don't want anybody to sit here. I have heard people say, and I say this as a father and now the grandfather of two little ones, don't say you know how you feel because we don't know how you feel. We will never, pray to God, know how you feel. Nobody can unless you go through it. Nobody knows how you feel.

I am going to ask all of us today that sits up here on this dais, and more will be coming in, to look you all in the eyes, to look at you directly, and to listen to you. I want all of us to hear for ourselves about the failure of sanctuary policies. I thank you.

Now I'm going to recognize the Ranking Member, Ms. Crockett, for an opening statement.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Let me echo the condolences that he said not to give. Regardless, as someone who I don't think will ever get comfortable with trying to explain the unexplainable, specifically to parents, there is a due order that we all believe will exist, especially when you bring your beautiful child into this world. The one thing that no parent ever anticipates is for that order to be disrupted.

Prior to coming to Congress, I was frustrated. I did a lot of the same work that Mr. Romanucci does. I had to face so many parents that lost their children and shouldn't have, whether it was doing the civil rights work or whether it was sometimes being the criminal defense attorney that would have to walk into court and represent people and make sure that their due process rights were preserved because they had been accused of killing somebody else.

I will say that I agree with the Chair when he says that speeches cannot suffice. They never have; they never will. I must say that our actions have to speak louder than any words, and one of the reasons that I got into politics is because I felt like politicians are very good at lip service. Frankly, this hearing is a hearing that we have had over and over and over, where we have talked about sanctuary cities. It frustrates me, if I am being perfectly honest, because it doesn't lead to solutions. It feels like political gamesmanship, and the Chair is my friend, but I always keep it as real as I can.

I want to say thank you to each and every one of you for being here today. Let me be clear about something.

Anyone who commits a crime, especially a violent crime, should be fully held accountable. No matter their citizenship status, race, sex, how much money they do or don't have, whether they went to school or not, or even if they are a government official, no one should be above the law.

I have listened to similar witnesses give their accounts and their stories. Specifically, as it relates to the witnesses that sit before us today, I have read your written testimony and I agree with some of the specific things that have been said in your written testimony, for example, Ms. Fox, that policies have consequences and that public policy should not require a threshold of victims before it is taken seriously. The only people in disagreement with this statement are the Republicans on this Committee. They have held multiple hearings on this topic but still haven't invited the families of anyone killed by ICE or who have died while in ICE's custody. More people died in ICE's custody last year than any time in the 21st century, and Republicans still haven't invited any of their families to testify before this Committee. ICE and CBP have either shot or shot at least 24 people, including American citizens. Some have died. Others have been severely injured. A college student even had to have their eye removed after being shot in the face. Republicans have not invited any of their families to testify before this Committee. As far as I know, Republicans have not even contacted the families of those killed or harmed.

What our witnesses went through is tragic and devastating, and their loved ones, you deserve justice. I have to be clear and say that their lives are not worth more, nor less, than, say, the life of Renee Good or the life of Alex Pretti or the life of Ruben Martinez, a 23-year-old U.S. citizen who was shot and killed by ICE in March 2025, or the life of Marimar Martinez, a 30-year-old U.S. citizen who was shot five times by Federal agents. Now, Ms. Martinez miraculously survived; but, to Ms. Fox's point, it, quote, "should not require a threshold of victims before it is taken seriously."

Just six months after Federal agents murdered Ruben Martinez, they tried to murder Marimar Martinez but failed. Just 2½ months later, Federal agents killed Renee Good. Just 17 days after that, Federal agents killed Alex Pretti. Each time, Republicans on this Committee have blamed the victims. If they had only been exercising their First Amendment rights, they would be alive today, or if Ms. Martinez hadn't panicked after Federal agents ran up behind her, put an AR-15 to her head, and said, quote, "do something, bitch," if she had just stayed calm, maybe she wouldn't have been shot five times. This is what failed policy looks like, and these families deserve to have a voice when they are discussing immigration enforcement policies in the United States.

Republicans would rather parade families experiencing tragedy around the halls of Congress for political purposes than to actually fix our broken immigration system. In fact, I don't know how many people remember, but, prior to the Presidential election, the House and the Senate had worked on legislation, and there was a candidate that did not want us to take up the legislation because they wanted to campaign on a broken system. The bad part about cam-

paigining on broken systems is that they continue to allow for harm to be permeated throughout the entirety of our country, and that is exactly what happened and that is what is happening right now.

In fact, Republicans are ignoring all crime across the United States. They refuse to enforce congressional subpoenas to advance the investigation into the Epstein pedophile ring. They have been completely silent on the fact that Donald Trump issued unconditional pardons for January 6th insurrectionists, many of whom were convicted on separate charges of rape, stalking, child abuse, domestic violence, drug trafficking, and possession of child porn. For months, they have ignored Trump's and Hegseth's war crimes when they ordered the killings of noncombatant civilians, many of whom were just fishermen; and now they're ignoring the President's illegal war and genocidal threats against the Iranian people.

Republicans have completely abandoned the American people. The ATF case referrals are down. The DEA case referrals are down. The number of weapons seized by DHS dropped by almost 80 percent. Drug arrests are down. In just the first six months of his administration, Trump's DOJ ended 23,000 criminal cases, including investigations into terrorism, tax evasion, drug trafficking, and other violent crimes. The Republicans on this Committee haven't held a single hearing, started any investigations, or done anything about it. Drug traffickers, men who prey on children, murderers, and potential terrorists are all roaming the streets of America because they would rather use these families' tragedy for political gain.

I am going to be real honest about this. Your children should be here today. Believe me when I tell you that. While I sit in this imperfect government, and we all know that government is run by imperfect people because we are all human, there are policies that can be changed. It would be my hope and prayer that we start to bring about policy changes that can prevent loss of life all around.

Right now, as federally elected officials, the one thing that we could do to start to save at least some folk is to focus on the fact that we have what seems to be government-sanctioned violence that is leading to people dying. We are the ones that oversee these government officials, and I would encourage the Chair to hold a hearing so that we can do that part because we are not elected to run any city. We are elected on the Federal level, and we are the ones that are supposed to have oversight over DHS and others.

With that, I will yield.

Mr. VAN DREW. I thank the Ranking Member. When I make a mistake, I make a mistake. It is important to me to start each meeting, and I forgot to do it, with the pledge, so we're going to stand up and do the pledge and then a moment of silence, just thinking about all that is transpiring. Please stand.

ALL. I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Mr. VAN DREW. Remain silent for a moment of silence.
(Moment of silence observed.)

Mr. VAN DREW. I am now going to recognize the Chair of the Committee of the whole, Mr. Jordan.

Mr. JORDAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that moment of silence. Thank you for doing this hearing. I thank our witnesses, particularly Ms. Heiling, Ms. Fox, and Ms. Wilkinson, for being here and for your loss.

I just said this on the House floor, but it is worth saying again. Think about what has happened in our country. First, for four years, the Democrats allowed 10 million illegal migrants to enter our Nation. Second, they set up sanctuary jurisdictions all over the country to make it more difficult to remove illegal migrants who commit crime. Third, they don't want to fund the people who actually remove those illegal migrants who commit crime. They don't want to fund ICE. That is their plan, and they are executing it. Of course, what is the end result? Tragedies like all your families have had to endure. That is what happens. That is what happens when you adopt the plan that they are putting in action. That is exactly what happens.

This is not political, as the Ranking Member just said. This is the facts. You have lived it in the worst way possible, the worst way, the most personal to your entire family. What has happened is tragic, and you know that, but you're willing to come here and testify because you want that plan to be stopped. Let in 10 million, create sanctuary jurisdictions where illegal migrants commit crimes, almost a third of the country is in that kind of jurisdiction: 18 cities, 11 States, three counties, and the District of Columbia, that kind of jurisdiction. Then, oh, the guys who go out and stop those bad guys, illegal migrants who did crime, they defunded them. Wow. That is the Democrats' plan? That is scary.

This is not political. This is for you to come tell your story, so, hopefully, we can stop what they've started to the tune of 10 million. Oh, by the way, it just got worse, it just got worse because on the House floor they said anyone who came here under temporary protected status is now going to be permanent. Three-hundred thousand Haitians who entered the country during the Biden Administration, we are going to make that permanent. They're making it even worse.

This is not a political hearing. This is to get the facts and the truth about the tragedy you have had to endure because of Democrat policies, plain and simple. I want to thank the Chair for his work, for this hearing, and for your courage and your willingness to come here today and tell the story.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. I thank the Chair. I recognize the Ranking Member from the State of Maryland.

Mr. RASKIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the family members who came to Washington today to tell us the stories of how they lost their children. Please forgive my black and bloody eye. I am nursing a medical injury, but I did not want to miss this important hearing. If the light gets too intense, forgive me if I put the sunglasses back on.

There is no pain, Mr. Chair, no anguish, no trauma, and no catastrophe worse for any parent than having to bury your child. My heart and my sympathy go to all of you who lost a child, as I did, and to your children who lost a brother or a sister. Nothing hurts more than losing a child, a family member, in the prime of their

life or having them suffer a catastrophic injury or assault because someone else decided that their life didn't matter. You are all here today, bravely, to tell us how much the lives of your children did matter and do matter and to ensure that their legacies here on Earth, while senselessly cut short or dramatically altered, still live on in your work and in your families.

In telling your loved ones' stories, you are advancing the righteous goal of ensuring that no other person suffers the pain of what you have gone through. You will not find a single member in this body who disagrees with your goal or your mission. This is a House, this is a Congress, filled on both sides with mothers and fathers, uncles and aunts, grandparents, brothers and sisters, and sons and daughters. We all want to protect our families and to keep them safe from harm.

The terrible crimes that your families have suffered must be universally condemned. Victims of violent crimes, all violent crimes, victims of vehicular homicides, victims of reckless driving, all of them must be listened to, must be heard, and must be respected. Victims must receive justice for the dreadful crimes that took their loved ones away. Perpetrators must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of our laws. Those who attack police officers or those who attack civilians must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of our laws. No one should be granted a blanket pardon without proof of remorse, rehabilitation, or restitution to their victims. Once perpetrators have served their sentence here, if they are in our country illegally, they should be removed from our country.

This is not a partisan problem, and nobody should try to turn it into a partisan problem. Tragically, the stories that we hear today can be told of any President. President Bush, President Obama, President Trump, and President Biden, each of their administrations released undocumented immigrants who went on to commit violent crimes. We could fill the room with people speaking of their lost family members at the hands of people who came into the country illegally under Democratic and Republican Administrations alike.

It is not a partisan problem. Everyone knows our immigration system has been broken for decades. Administration after administration, we have lacked the political will to do the hard work of putting together a bipartisan solution. We need an immigration system that makes it a lot harder to come here illegally or impossible to come here illegally and a lot easier to come here legally to participate in the American dream. We need an immigration system that gives dreamers and others who have built a productive and law-abiding life in our country a pathway to legal status.

Alas, this administration is focused on mass arrests, mass detention, and mass deportation that are dividing our country in unprecedented ways. To achieve this goal, the DHS is not focused on going after the worst of the worst. The category of violent criminals quickly exhausted, with Stephen Miller demanding 3,000 draconian immigration arrests every single day, Federal agents simply started indiscriminately rounding up immigrants and American citizens who looked like immigrants, according to the agents. ICE has arrested kindergartners, daycare teachers, and parents dropping off their kids at school. They dragged U.S. citizen grandparents out of

their homes in their underwear in subzero temperatures and ripped children from their beds in the middle of the night, using them as bait to arrest their parents.

When ICE does manage to arrest people with criminal records or charges, those are often people who are currently in custody. In many cases, ICE is effectively giving criminals get out of jail free cards by deporting them in the middle of their criminal sentences or, even worse, deporting them before their trials can even begin, depriving their victims of justice. All so the agency can simply jack up the President's deportation numbers. This makes it vital to hear from families like yours who have suffered from terrible crimes to hear about the importance of accountability for those crimes.

Your testimony is an important and powerful reminder that the fundamental responsibility of our Federal law enforcement and justice system is to keep the people safe and to ensure that no one is ever above the law and no one is ever beneath it. The government must stand on the side of victims of crimes, not their perpetrators. I tried to remind Attorney General Bondi of that principle when she appeared here before our Committee. That is why we have been so focused on insisting that we hear from the victims of Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell and their elite pedophile network, the women survivors who our government has failed at every turn. We failed to protect them from the appalling human trafficking and rape ring in the first place. Then, our government failed them again by not holding any of Epstein's powerful friends accountable, exposing victims' names while censoring the names of perpetrators and playing outrageous political games with the files and DOJ's possession that they are legally compelled to turn over to Congress and make public.

I was happy to hear that the First Lady of the United States agrees with that. We hope that our Committee will heed her call to hold hearings, as Ms. Trump said, "with the survivors of Jeffrey Epstein's billion-dollar global sex trafficking ring."

This is also why we speak up for all the people victimized and harmed by the people who stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021. Not only the over 150 police officers who were bludgeoned, beaten, crushed, and even died because of what happened that day, but also for all those who have been harmed by the January 6th perpetrators after they got their pardons from President Trump. These pardon recipients have gone on to abuse women and children, plot murders, and commit sexual assault and kidnapping.

After January 6th rioter Andrew Paul Johnson got his pardon from President Trump, he repeatedly sexually abused two 12-year-old children and tried to keep them quiet by promising to share with them some of the millions of dollars in restitution that he plans to receive from the Trump Administration. If not for President Trump's pardon, these children never would have been molested. Their innocence would not have been shattered by this monster.

It is essential to hear from people harmed also by the aggressive police State style immigration enforcement tactics that have terrified the country. They don't target the worst of the worst; they are the worst of the worst. This includes hearing from the families of the three American citizens ICE agents have gunned down point-

blank in our streets, like Renee Good, the 36-year-old mother and poet who was shot three times in the head and body by an ICE officer while she was driving her car.

This includes the American citizens who have been profiled, beaten, detained, and even deported by ICE. It includes the police officers who are finding it more difficult to do their jobs because immigrant communities no longer trust them and prosecutors whose cases are stymied because ICE deports their defendants, witnesses, and victims before their trials can even begin, and it includes the family members of people who have died at the hands of their abusers because they were too afraid to report them to the police for fear they would be deported.

Failing to arrest and deport the worst of the worst makes all of us less safe, but so, too, does allowing Federal agents to trample the rights and freedoms of the American people.

I want to thank you all again for appearing before us today and hope that we will continue to listen to the voices of everyone whose lives have been so immeasurably altered by the failure of our government to act and enact meaningful policy changes to keep all our streets and all our people safe. I look forward to hearing your testimony today, and I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Mr. VAN DREW. I thank the Ranking Member. Without objection, all other opening statements will be included in the record.

We now will introduce today's witnesses.

Ms. Patricia Fox. Ms. Fox lives in Denver metro area and is the full-time caregiver to her daughter, Carissa. Carissa was hit by an unlicensed and uninsured driver who entered the United States illegally. She sustained a traumatic brain injury and now requires full-time care.

Jen Heiling. Ms. Heiling is the mother of Brady Heiling, a young man who, along with his girlfriend, were hit by an illegal alien. Brady died from his injuries five days later, while his girlfriend was killed instantly. The alien was a Honduran national and was intoxicated and driving the wrong way on the highway.

Mr. Antonio Romanucci. Mr. Romanucci is the founding partner of Romanucci Blandin, a Chicago-based law firm. He represents the family of Renee Good.

Ms. Laura Wilkerson. Ms. Wilkerson is the mother of Joshua Wilkerson, a young man who was beaten to death, set on fire by an illegal alien who was his high school classmate. Joshua was giving this individual a ride home from school when he attacked him.

We are going to begin by swearing you all in. Would you please rise? Raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm under penalty of perjury that the testimony you are about to give is true and correct to the best of your knowledge, information, and belief, so help you God.

Thank you. You may sit down. Let the record reflect the witnesses have answered in the affirmative. Please know that your written testimony will be entered into the record in its entirety. We ask that you summarize your testimony to no longer than five minutes.

Ms. Fox, you may begin.

STATEMENT OF PATRICIA FOX

Ms. FOX. Thank you for reminding us where we were. I thought for a second that I wandered into an Epstein file hearing. "Now, that I have been holding my arms open to what life has to offer me, I couldn't be happier." That was the last text from my daughter roughly two hours before an unlicensed, uninsured, illegal alien would run a stop sign, cross three lanes of traffic without looking, and collide with Carissa, slamming her head first into a concrete barrier. The driver then fled the scene with her boyfriend and aunt, not knowing if my daughter was alive or dead.

My daughter was ambitious. She was enrolled in esthetician school. She quickly rose to the top of her class, landed jobs with high-end salons. She would smile with confidence as she talked about her dreams of opening a skincare line based on beauty secrets around the world. She was very specific that her goal was to make quality skincare affordable for everyone because everyone deserved to feel beautiful. I was so proud of the young woman that Carissa was blossoming into before my eyes. She would have done it, too, because when my daughter put her mind to something, she achieved it.

Now, she's minimally conscious, nonverbal, is wheel chair bound, and eats through a feeding tube. She has very little cognitive control over her body. She communicates discomfort through grunts and moans and, at night, she often calls out to me. I think she is afraid of the dark, or being alone, or both. I don't know for sure because she can't tell me.

I know the pulse ox that monitors her vitals while she is sleeping says her heart rate is high when I walk in. Then, I touch her arm and sing to her in those wee hours, and her heart rate goes back down and she goes to sleep. To think, we're the lucky ones. My little girl survived. I still get to kiss her. I still get to hold her hand. Many Angel Families don't get that.

That blessing is not lost on me. For us, there is hope, regardless of what the doctors say, because my God is big and he happens to be in the business of miracles. Hope for the future does not erase today's reality. That reality is my daughter's care is now my full-time responsibility. Her medical needs are extensive. Her medical bills well into seven figures and growing. The person responsible for this has contributed nothing.

I am not here out of anger, but out of responsibility, responsibility to my daughter and responsibility to ensure that what happened to Carissa is not simply dismissed as an unfortunate exception but recognized as an all-too-common pattern. This is not just about my family. Destructive sanctuary policies carry real-world consequences. Angel Families live with these consequences every day. Each Angel Family that comes before all of you is risking more pain and trauma. We receive death threats. We have lost friends. We have to relive our trauma over and over again, every time we tell our stories.

Who is going to tell our stories if we don't? You will never hear Carissa's story from Colorado Democrats, like John Hickenlooper, Jason Crow, Brittany Petersen, or Joe Neguse. Here we are telling our stories until not one more American daughter, American son,

or American family loses a loved one to these fully preventable tragedies.

We are often told that illegal aliens commit crimes at lower rates than American citizens. They say studies show, but when you start digging into those studies they don't hold up under scrutiny. Let's talk about some statistics that we do know. Unlicensed drivers are estimated to have five times higher risk of being involved in a fatal crash. They are often involved in reckless behaviors, such as speeding and impaired driving, leading to higher rates of serious injury and fatalities. Colorado has one of the highest rates of uninsured drivers in the United States, with estimates between 17–20 percent. Of all uninsured Colorado drivers, about 25 percent are estimated to be unlicensed illegal aliens. Do you think that a driver is magically protected from these statistics simply because they are undocumented?

Here's another factual statistic: Entering the United States illegally is considered a criminal offense under Federal law. One-hundred percent of illegal aliens are criminals.

We often hear that enforcement should only focus on the worst of the worst. My daughter was not harmed by someone that was labeled as the worst of the worst. She was harmed by someone who shouldn't have been in a position to hurt her in the first place.

I reject the idea that families must wait for tragedy before action is taken. There should not have to be a Carissa, a Brady, a Hallie, or a Joshua. Public policy should not require a threshold of victims on either side. Our children are not your collateral damage. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Fox follows:]

Testimony of Patricia Fox

Before the Subcommittee on Oversight
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives

Hearing on: *The Human Toll of Sanctuary Policies: Stories from Victims and Families*

"Now that I've been holding my arms open to what life has to offer me I couldn't be happier."

That was the last text from my daughter roughly 2 hours before Valeria Bermudez Marcano would run a stop sign, cross three lanes without looking and collide with Carissa, slamming her headfirst into the concrete barrier at Parker and 225.

The driver fled the scene with her boyfriend and aunt, never calling 911 and never checking to see if my daughter was alive or dead.

My daughter was left fighting for her life.

My daughter had just moved back to Colorado 6 weeks prior with a fire in her to follow her ambitions, build a life and perhaps one day, have a family of her own. Driven, she wasted no time in enrolling into aesthetician school, rising quickly to the top of her class, landing a job with a high-end salon and reconnecting with friends. She'd smile with confidence as she talked about her dreams of creating a skincare line based on beauty secrets around the world. She was very specific that her goal was to make quality skincare affordable for everyone, because "everyone deserved to feel beautiful." I was so proud of the young woman Carissa was blossoming into right before my eyes.

She would have done it too because when my daughter put her mind to something, she achieved it.

Now? She's minimally conscious, nonverbal, is wheelchair bound and eats through a feeding tube. She has very little cognitive control over her body. She spends her days 100% dependent on me, my mom and her home nurses for the most basic human functions. She communicates discomfort through grunts and moans and at night, she often "calls out" to me. I think she's afraid of the dark or of being alone or both, I don't know for sure, because she can't tell me. I just know that the pulse ox that monitors her vitals while she sleeps says her heartrate is high when I walk in and when I touch her arm and sing to her in those wee hours, it settles back down and she eventually goes back to sleep.

And to think, we're the lucky ones. My little girl survived. I still get to kiss her, hold her hand when she lifts it for me, watch her close her eyes as I brush her hair. Many Angel Families don't get that. That blessing is not lost on me. For us, there is hope, regardless of what the doctors say, because God is big and happens to be in the business of miracles.

The Reality That Followed

My daughter's care is now my full-time responsibility.

Her medical bills are already in the seven figures and continue to rise. The individual responsible, an uninsured driver, has contributed nothing.

Instead, the burden of her care falls entirely on our family.

Each day is a fight.

I fight insurance denials for therapies prescribed by her doctors.

I fight for equipment that allows her to sit safely, breathe properly, and avoid further injury.

I fight for services that are not optional, they are necessary for her survival and quality of life.

Even when she qualifies, access is not guaranteed.

Many of the systems my daughter depends on, home health services, non-emergency medical transport, adult day programs and the like, are under increasing scrutiny due to documented fraud and abuse. While oversight is necessary, the consequence is that families like mine face additional barriers to accessing legitimate care.

So while I care for a daughter who cannot advocate for herself, I am also navigating systems that are often difficult to access and sustain.

The Policy Environment That Allowed This

What happened to my daughter did not "just happen".

When laws are not enforced, it creates an environment where lawfulness is simply unnecessary. That environment extends beyond immigration status, it affects everyday decisions, including whether individuals obtain driver's licenses, carry insurance, and follow basic public safety laws.

The individual who struck Carissa was driving without a license and without insurance. After causing the collision, she fled the scene without calling 911 or offering any kind of assistance.

That is not an isolated issue. It is part of a broader pattern that emerges when accountability is grossly neglected.

“The Worst of the Worst”

We often hear that enforcement should focus only on “the worst of the worst.”

My daughter was not harmed by someone previously labeled as “the worst of the worst.”

She was harmed by someone who should not have been in a position to cause that harm in the first place.

I reject the idea that families like mine must wait for tragedy before action is taken.

There should not have to be a Carissa.

Or a Laken Riley.

Or a Sheridan Gorman.

Or a Katie Abraham.

Or the thousands of victims that have suffered injuries and death.

Public policy should not require a threshold of victims before it is taken seriously. Our children are not “acceptable collateral damage”.

The “Lower Crime Rate” Argument

We are often told that individuals in the country illegally commit crimes at lower rates than American citizens. They say “studies show”. But when you start digging into those studies, they don’t hold up under scrutiny.

So let’s talk about statistics we know:

Unlicensed drivers are estimated to have 5 times higher risk of being involved in a fatal crash. They are often involved in reckless behaviors, such as speeding and impaired driving, leading to higher rates of serious injury and fatalities.

Research indicates that crashes involving unlicensed drivers are generally more severe than those with licensed drivers, often resulting in higher fatality rates.

Colorado has one of the highest rates of uninsured drivers in the U.S., with estimates between 17.5% and 19.7% as of 2024.

While roughly 16% of all Colorado drivers are uninsured, about 25% of the state’s uninsured motorists are estimated to be unlicensed, illegal aliens.

Despite the licensing program, a substantial portion of uninsured vehicles in Colorado (roughly 24–25%) are driven by undocumented individuals who do not have a license, and therefore, lack insurance.

Here's another factual statistic:

Entering the United States illegally is considered a criminal offense under federal law, specifically under 8 U.S.C. § 1325.

100% of illegal aliens are criminals.

Preventable harm is being ignored and allowed to occur.

This cannot continue.

We the people want secure borders and deportations. How do I know? Our 45th President ran on a promise to do both and that man is now our 47th President.

The Response We Encounter

Since speaking publicly, I have heard the same responses repeatedly:

"It could have just as easily been an American citizen."

But it wasn't.

Facts must matter more than hypotheticals.

I have also been told, "It just sounds like a tragic accident."

It was not.

It was not an accident that the individual entered the United States illegally in 2023.

It was not an accident that she drove without a license.

It was not an accident that she drove without insurance.

And it was certainly not an accident that she fled the scene without rendering aid.

I have also been told that sharing my daughter's story is "bigoted."

It is not bigotry to want your child to come home safe.

The Cost of Speaking Out

Each Angel Family that comes forward is risking more pain and trauma.

We receive death threats.

We've lost friends.

We have to relive our trauma over and over again, every time we tell our stories. But who is going to tell our stories if we don't? The mainstream media? Not likely.

You'll never hear Carissa's story from Colorado democrat politicians like John Hickenlooper, Jason Crow, Brittany Petersen, Jared Polis or Joe Neguse.

So here we are, telling our stories again and again until not one more daughter, son, loved one is lost to these fully preventable tragedies.

Why I Am Here

I do not want my daughter's life reduced to a story.

I want it to matter.

I want it to lead to action.

Our family received a small measure of justice when we were informed that Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) in Denver deported the individual responsible quietly, expeditiously, and safely back to Venezuela.

But that is not enough.

The only thing that comes close to making this "ok" is knowing that what happened to my daughter will not happen to another family.

Closing

Policies have consequences.

Those consequences are not abstract.

They are carried by families like mine for the rest of our lives.

I ask this Committee to take those consequences seriously, and to act accordingly.

Thank you.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Ms. Fox. No words, no words. Ms. Heiling, you are next. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF JENNIFER HEILING

Ms. HEILING. Thank you. My name is Jennifer Heiling. I am an Angel Mom, and I am from a small town in Minnesota. My son, Brady Heiling, and his girlfriend, Hallie Helgeson, were tragically killed while celebrating their three-year anniversary at a concert in Wisconsin. We got a text that they had made it to their car and were headed home. This would be the last thing that we had ever heard from them. On July 20, 2025, our lives came to a screeching halt. Brady and Hallie were innocently driving home while an illegal immigrant that was driving the wrong way while intoxicated crashed into them. She was a multiple offender two times over her legal limit and had failed to install her interlock device that would have prevented this whole incident from happening. Above all else, she has never had a driver's license to be on the road in the first place.

This woman was not a hardened criminal. She was just a mom that was allowed to live in this country completely exempt from consequences for breaking our laws. Time after time, she was allowed to keep living here above the law without any attempt to change her behavior and bad decisions. The ability to seek protection and be shielded by living in a sanctuary city will continue to allow illegal immigrants to continue to take the innocent lives of Americans.

If you want to seek refuge in our country and make a better life for yourself, I am in total support but expect you to follow our laws. Our safety depends on it. Why are we allowing people to live among us that want to cause us harm? Why are we expected to allow them to keep offending and not be deported? Do you think this is really helping anyone seek a better life? It is not. This is called being an enabler. If you are unable to live by the laws of this country, you should be removed at the very first offense. Why are we waiting for our children to be murdered? If the woman responsible for murdering our children was deported after the first time she was drinking and driving, we wouldn't be forced to be living this nightmare.

To allow someone to continue to be on the road with multiple traffic violations, a history of drinking and driving, not to mention never legally obtaining a driver's license or citizenship, is absolutely recklessness. This entire tragedy was completely preventable, and not just for us but for her too. If you think allowing anyone to live their lives here without consequence is helping them in any way become a better person, you are mistaken. This woman will have to live the rest of her life knowing she not only murdered two innocent teenagers full of hopes, dreams, just ready to start their lives together, but she also destroyed her life, our life, our community, and our community's lives. Generations of kids and classmates left to figure out why was this allowed to happen. It should have never happened.

Try to explain to Brady's 11-year-old sister that he will never attend another one of her events to cheer her on. He will never get to see her grow up. Explain to his 16-year-old sister he won't get

to be here to protect her from the guys with bad intentions or meeting her newest farm animal addition. Tell Hallie's brother that he is now an only child, all because an illegal immigrant that was allowed to live in a sanctuary city while breaking our laws repeatedly until she finally murdered someone with her reckless selfish ways. Please, I beg you to explain to me that I will not get to watch my son grow into the man I was so diligently raising him to be. I will not get to see him succeed at all his goals he has worked so hard to make come true. Then, you explain to Hallie's mom why she will never get to see her little girl become a mother herself, and you explain to her dad why he will never get to walk his little girl down the aisle and give her away.

Please, I ask that you tell my husband that the company he spent his whole life building was for nothing. Brady will never get to work alongside of him just so that a group of people that feel it is more important to protect those illegal immigrants let them keep offending until they completely destroy the lives of innocent children and families is more important than our rights and safety of American citizens.

It is really easy to say that we need to protect these groups when you are unaffected. It is really easy for people I don't even know to sit there and say my kids deserve better than to be part of a political agenda. If you believe this to be true, you are sadly mistaken. I don't want to be here. We don't want to be here, but we weren't given a choice. Our children were murdered. Here we are trying to prevent this nightmare from happening to anyone else.

It is to protect the loved ones of the very people attacking us. Some of my own family find it necessary to tell me this is an issue of drinking and driving, not immigration. If this particular woman would have been responsibly dealt with and deported after the first time drinking and driving, then we would not be in this position right now. My entire future has been literally stolen from me in a way that will never make sense, and it still doesn't seem real.

I should be listening to Brady and Hallie tell me about college and about how they can't wait to come home for the summer. Because we continue to protect people like this and give them free reign in our communities, the innocent lives will continue to be taken. Angel Families will continue to multiply. Whose kid has to die before these people will see where we are coming from? Whose family has to be destroyed before they are willing to admit, hey, we have a problem? What tragedy has to rip their lives apart before they realize that, when they tell me I need to look at my situation differently, it is selfish, heartless, and cruel? If my reasoning is wrong, then I pray that you will never know how it feels to live a day in my life.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Heiling follows:]

Testimony of Jennifer Heiling

My name is Jennifer Heiling, I am an Angel Mom and I am from a small town in Minnesota. My son Brady Heiling and his girlfriend Hallie Helgeson were tragically killed while celebrating their 3 year anniversary at a concert in Wisconsin. We got a text that they had made it to the car and were headed home. This would be the last thing we ever heard from them. On July 20th 2025 our lives came to a screeching halt.

Brady and Hallie were innocently driving home when an illegal immigrant that was driving the wrong way while intoxicated crashed into them. She was a multiple offender, 2 times over her legal limit, and had failed to install her interlock device that would have prevented this whole incident from happening and above all else has never had a drivers license to be on the road in the first place. This woman was not a hardened criminal, she was just a mom that was allowed to live in this country completely exempt from consequences for breaking our laws. Time after time she was allowed to keep living here, above the law and without any attempt to change her behavior and bad decisions. The ability to seek protection and be shielded by living in a sanctuary city will continue to allow illegal immigrants to continue to take the innocent lives of Americans. If you want to seek refuge in our country and make a better life for yourself I am in total support but expect you to follow our laws. Our safety depends on it. Why are we allowing people to live amongst us that want to cause us harm? Why are we expected to allow them to keep offending and not be deported? Do you think this is really helping anyone seek a better life? It is not! This is called being an enabler! If you are unable to live by the laws of this country you should be removed at the very FIRST offense! Why are we waiting for our children to be murdered? If the woman responsible for murdering our kids was deported after the first time drinking and driving we wouldn't be forced to be living this nightmare. To allow someone to continue to be on the road with multiple traffic violations and a history of drinking and driving not to mention never legally obtaining a drivers license or citizenship is absolutely recklessness. This entire tragedy was completely preventable and not just for us but for her too. If you think allowing anyone to live their lives here without consequence is helping them in any way become a better person you are mistaken. Now this woman will have to live with herself knowing that she not only murdered two innocent teenagers full of hopes and dreams, just ready to start their lives together but also destroyed her life, our lives, our communities and generations of kids and classmates left to figure out why this was allowed to happen. It should have never happened! Try to explain to Brady's 11 year old sister that he will never attend another one of her events to cheer her on, never get to see

her grow up. Explain to his 16 year old sister that he won't be here to protect her from guys with bad intentions or meet her newest farm animal addition. Tell Hallie's brother that he is now an only child all because an illegal immigrant that was allowed to live in a sanctuary city while breaking our laws repeatedly until she finally murdered someone with her wreckless selfish ways. And please, I beg you to explain to me that I will not get to watch my son grow into the man I was so diligently raising him to be, to see him succeed at all of his goals he has worked so hard to make come true. Then explain to Hallie's mom why she will never get to see her little girl become a mother herself and tell her dad that he will never get to walk her down the aisle and give her away. Please, I ask that you tell my husband that the company he spent his whole life building was all for nothing! Brady will never get to work along side of him. Just so that the group of people that feel that it is more important to protect illegal immigrants and let them keep offending until they completely destroy the lives of innocent children and families is more important than our rights and safety of American citizens. It is really easy to say that we need to protect these groups when you are unaffected. It's really easy for people I don't even know to sit there and say my kids deserve better than to be part of a political agenda. If you believe this to be true, you are sadly mistaken! I don't want to be here! We don't want to be here! But we weren't given a choice. Our children were murdered! So here we are trying to prevent this nightmare from happening to anyone else. Even if it's to protect the loved ones of the very people attacking us. Some of my own family find it necessary to tell me this is an issue of drinking and driving and not immigration. If this particular woman would have been responsibly delt with and deported after the FIRST time drinking and driving then we would not be in this position right now. My entire future has been literally stolen from me in a way that will never make sense, it still doesn't even seem real. I should be listening to Brady and Hallie tell me about college and how they can't wait to be home for the summer. But because we continue to protect people like this and give them free reign on our communities, the innocent lives will continue to be taken. Angel Families will continue to multiply. Who's kid has to die before these people will see where we are coming from? Who's family has to be destroyed before they are willing to admit we have a problem? What tragedy has to rip their lives apart before they realize that when they tell me that I need to look at my situation differently it is selfish, heartless and cruel. If my reasoning is wrong then I pray that you will never know how it feels to live a day in my life.

On July 20th, 2025, in the middle of the night, a parents worst nightmare came true for us. The phone rang and on the other end of the phone was a social worker from a trauma unit telling us that our son Brady was involved in a crash. Brady and his girlfriend Hallie were celebrating their 3 year anniversary at a concert in Wisconsin that night and had messaged when they got to the car and were headed home. That was the last time we would hear from them. This was the last moment of my life as I knew it. The life I worked so hard at building, the kids I worked so hard at raising, the family I worked so hard at protecting, the end to everything as I knew it would be taken from me from an illegal immigrant with no consequences for breaking our laws over and over again. Protected by a sanctuary city that would continue to allow her to make reckless decisions and release her back into the public endangering everyone in her path. Their safety is and was of no concern to the people who would rather protect illegal immigrants choosing to cause harm, destruction and death to innocent citizens of this country than to stand for my rights and basic safety for the public who are legal citizens and willing to abide by the laws of this great nation. As I tell you all about what happened to Brady and Hallie that night keep in mind that only two of our local politicians have reached out to our families stating their most sincere condolences by the injustice that was done to them with inquiries of how they could help us and how to protect others from this happening again. Nothing from the governor of Wisconsin where our tragedy took place. And nothing from our governor from MN. While governor Walz has been very emotional about what he feels is broken in our country we have heard absolutely nothing from him on the deaths of our innocent children who were in fact legal citizens and residents of our great state of MN and how to prevent this from happening in the future to any more people. The lack of acknowledgement that there is a huge safety problem by shielding illegal immigrants in sanctuary cities that allow them to break the laws of this country over and over again and release them back into the public instead of deporting them before they do more damage is reckless and irresponsible. And now our innocent children are gone and the outrage isn't for protecting the rights and safety of law abiding citizens but to shield the individuals that choose not to be here legally and follow our laws. Besides the two local politicians it has only been President Trump that was willing to honor the devastating loss of Brady and Hallie at the signing of the Angel Families Day Remembrance ceremony. Honoring our lost loved ones in this way didn't make it hurt any less but for them to be recognized for the injustice done to them on this level was definitely special.

The night their lives were taken ours were too. We were told that Hallie was eventually pronounced dead at the scene after finding her trapped in the car with a very light pulse. Brady laid on the road with first responders and his body badly broken, repeatedly trying to stand up to go to Hallie. He was transported by helicopter to a trauma unit where he spent

5 days fighting for his life before succumbing to his severe injuries. Our worlds were shattered in the blink of an eye by someone who didn't care about the laws or the safety of the innocent people around them. Brady and Hallie, two of the most innocent and influential kids, were taken from this world, destroying the lives of all of those that knew and loved them. Two teenagers that were making such a positive impact in this world with so many goals and dreams ahead of them, gone. Two beautiful kids that loved each other with such a pure and innocent love were recklessly killed.

Brady at only 19 years of age was well known for his compassion for others and his ability to make you feel seen and heard. Often referred to as a "gentle giant", he was a very talented athlete on the track and football field, he put a lot of time and energy in the gym growing his body and muscles that would carry him and all of his hard work and determination to be able to compete at state level for track and field. On and off the field Brady made a positive impact with his hard work ethic and determination. He was and is a role model for many people young and old with his drive for wanting to always do better and give 110%. Brady was the definition of a rule follower and was certain to hold others accountable by pushing them to make better decisions, to make their lives and this world a better place. Brady fought for his life from a crash so powerful that nobody should have survived. A crash that should have never happened! His strong young body did what it could until the swelling on his brain was just too much. Brady was able to save many lives with his ultimate sacrifice. With his decision at only 16 years old to be a donor, he was able to donate his heart, kidneys, liver, pancreas and corneas along with lots of tissue, muscle, skin, valves and bones. Brady being a rare donor with AB positive blood has saved many people that thought they would never come off the waiting list for donations. Even after his death he continues to impact the lives of people he didn't even know.

Brady's two younger sisters Korri and Zoey miss their leader and protector and are now forced to find their way in this world without the love and support they had in both Brady and Hallie. Brady's parents Josh and Jen miss their numerous daily "Brady hugs" and are so proud and honored by the way Brady lived his life and will be remembered for his strong and kind spirit with shirts that proudly showcase, "Our Warrior" and "Bradystrong"!

Sweet Hallie was only 18 and left behind so many family and friends that will forever remember her giggle and kind heart. Hallie had just graduated from high school in May and was so full of life which included being very active in her community, sports and church. She was often said to be a ray of sunshine and had a great way of looking at life that brought

fun and laughter to literally every situation. Her close friends will tell you about her silly side and many tik tok dances and videos she loved to make. She was well known as the nickname queen and loved to give a name to all of those around her, even her car "Ellie". Hallie had a unique way of making you feel loved and special just by simply being present.

Her only brother Camden is just two years older and often in their younger years were commonly mistaken as twins. Camden and Hallie's bond was a beautiful and unbreakable bond that has left a whole in his life that can never be filled. Along with that, the trio of Brady, Hallie and Camden being such a fun and special relationship for all to witness will forever be missed. Hallie's parents Joe and Alyson miss her quirky daily snaps and her witty banter including her constant practical jokes. Hallie brought so much love to this world and continues to be influential by reminding everyone to "Live for Hallie" which her family, friends and community proudly are reminded of by wearing shirts made stating just that. Hallie was also a donor and was able to help save the lives of over 75 people. Her family could not be more proud of the way Hallie lived her life and was able to impact so many people in her short 18 years of life.

The families of Brady and Hallie are devastated beyond belief and still wait for them to walk through the door smiling and laughing. They lived their short lives to the absolute fullest and made this world and everyone around them better, they continue to make positive impacts even after the horrible crash that stole their lives. Two young lives taken too soon in a situation that was completely preventable has made living daily life for these families unbearable. Brady and Hallie loved their life and lived it to the fullest. They loved their family, friends, Jesus and most of all each other! We are all better because of them and will honor their lives forever.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Ms. Heiling. Mr. Romanucci.

STATEMENT OF ANTONIO ROMANUCCI

Mr. ROMANUCCI. Chair Van Drew, Chair Jordan, Ranking Member Crockett, and Ranking Member Raskin, my name is Antonio Romanucci. I am a national civil rights attorney, and I have the deep honor of representing the family of Renee Good. It was her tragic death in Minnesota by Federal immigration agents in Minneapolis that I took on that representation. I also represent U.S. citizens whose constitutional rights were violated by Federal agents in Chicago.

First, please let me express my deepest respect to my copanelists and mothers who have suffered unthinkable loss, tragedy, and trauma. Your families' tragedies are inexcusable, and we respect your courage. As someone who represents victims of violent crime, that too often the second tragedy is that victims struggle to get the justice that they deserve.

We share your concern that America needs commonsense immigration reform. I have heard all you say the same thing. Marching thousands of masked agents into communities, rounding up Black and Brown people, including children, terrorizing them, while creating collateral damage of death and catastrophic harm to American citizens, that's not the answer. All Americans should feel safe in their own cities where citizens are free from unlawful harm from anyone, including agents of their own government. Harm of Americans, by Americans, in American cities is devastating to our Republic. Those who have committed these violations of rights must be held accountable, just as all people who commit violent acts must be held accountable.

Allow me to give insight into an American mother of three, Renee Good, who was killed while she was squarely being protected by the First Amendment. Here are words that her brother spoke to fellow Members of Congress not long ago, quote:

The deep distress our family feels because of Renee's loss in such a violent and unnecessary way is complicated by feelings of disbelief and desperation for change. Our family took some consolation thinking that perhaps Renee's death would bring change in our country. It has not. These encounters with Federal agents are changing many lives, including ours, forever. The most important thing we can do is help our country understand what a beautiful American we have lost. A sister, a daughter, a mother, a partner, and friend.

The distress is also felt by Alex Pretti's family. It is felt by Marimar Martinez in Chicago, shot five times by a Federal agent while bringing a donation to church. It is felt by elected official Juan Muñoz, violently detained and used as a prop for a DHS video. It is felt by children separated from their parents and shipped to detention centers in another State.

Family after family in city after city, the harms by our own Federal Government in American cities are staggering: Needless injury and death by masked agents undermining trust in all law enforcement, violations of freedom of speech, Fourth Amendment freedom from unlawful search and seizure, false statements of absolute immunity for agents and false narratives about victims, and failure to properly investigate claims of police misconduct.

What is not understood is that Renee Good's family cannot pursue justice against a Federal officer the same way as if a State or local officer had fired those gunshots. This anomaly must end. Federal officers should not receive a special pass on accountability, and there should be a bridge to justice for all victims.

Current law requires that you ask for permission from this Federal Government to file a lawsuit against it and only allows for a trial by judge and not a jury in defiance of the 7th Amendment. Reasonable updates to Section 1983 of the Civil Rights Act or the Federal Tort Claims Act are needed to ensure access to justice and accountability for wrongdoers. I urge Congress to ensure all people have the right to a jury trial, including those hurt or killed by Federal officers.

In conclusion, I deeply respect the mothers who spoke their truths today. Their pain and anger are something no parent should ever experience, and it is palpable in this room. The family of Renee Good and so many other families impacted by the acts of Federal agents have, likewise, suffered immeasurable pain and anger, and all victims are worthy of the right to seek accountability.

We all want safety and peace. Criminal acts of all kinds must be addressed. Please create commonsense immigration policies. Pursue accountability for the harm done by ICE with the same level of commitment that you pursue accountability for all people who commit crimes in this country and demand full compliance to our United States Constitution. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Romanucci follows:]

**Attorney Antonio Romanucci, Romanucci & Blandin LLC
Witness Statement before House Judiciary Subcommittee on Oversight
April 16, 2026**

**Chair Van Drew, Chair Jordan, Ranking Member Crockett,
Ranking Member Raskin and distinguished Members of the
Subcommittee;**

My name is Antonio Romanucci and I am a national civil rights attorney with the deep honor of representing the family of Renee Good for her tragic death by a federal agent in Minneapolis. I also represent U.S. citizens whose constitutional rights were violated by federal agents in Chicago.

First, please let me express my deepest respect to my co-panelists and mothers who have suffered unthinkable loss and inexcusable tragedy. As someone who represents victims of violent crime, I know that the second tragedy too often is that justice is elusive.

We share your concern that America needs common sense immigration reform, and that “worst of the worst” criminals without documentation should unquestionably be removed.

And I believe we can agree that lawmakers have failed to enact public safety initiatives on immigration thus far.

However, marching thousands of masked agents into communities, rounding up Black and Brown people, terrorizing them, while creating collateral damage of death and catastrophic harm to American citizens is not the answer.

All Americans should feel safe in their own cities. And all American cities should be sanctuaries where citizens are free from harm by their own government.

No American citizen should suffer at the hands of someone who swore a duty to our Constitution. This is devastating to our Republic. It must stop and never resume. Those who have taken part need to be held accountable.

Allow me to give insight into the American mother of three, Renee Good, killed while squarely protected by the First Amendment. Let me share some words by her brothers who spoke to your fellow Members of Congress on February 3rd.

I Quote... “The deep distress our family feels because of Renee’s loss is complicated by feelings of disbelief and desperation for change. Our family took some consolation thinking that perhaps Renee’s death would bring change in our country. It has not. These encounters with federal agents are changing many lives, including ours, forever. The most important thing we can do is help our country understand what a beautiful American we have lost. A sister, daughter, mother, partner and friend.” ... End Quote.

This distress is also felt by Alex Pretti’s family. By Marimar Martinez in Chicago, shot five times by a federal agent while bringing a donation to church. By elected official Juan Munoz violently detained and used as a prop for a DHS propaganda video. By children separated from their parents and shipped to detention centers in another state. Family after family. City after city.

The harms by our own government in American cities are staggering:

- Needless injury and death by masked agents undermining trust in all law enforcement.
- Violations of freedom of speech and Fourth Amendment freedom from unlawful search and seizure.
- False statements of absolute immunity for agents, and false narratives about victims. Our leaders must be held to a standard of truth in their speech.
- Failure to properly investigate claims of police misconduct.

I ask... What are we doing? What is the end game?

The “worst of the worst” mission failed and wreaked havoc on American citizens. We saw it with our own eyes.

What is not widely understood is that Renee’s loved ones cannot pursue justice against a federal officer the same way as if a state or local officer had fired those shots. Federal officers should not receive a special pass on accountability.

The Civil Rights Act contains U.S. Section 1983 which guides this process – and it is not a level playing field for all.

The only option, the Federal Tort Claims Act or FTCA, demands you ask the federal government for permission to file a lawsuit, and then only provides a trial before a judge, not a jury of a person’s peers, in defiance of the Seventh Amendment.

I urge Congress to act and amend Section 1983 or the FTCA to ensure all people have the right to jury trial and accountability.

In conclusion, I truly respect the mothers here today. Their pain is real, their anger is understandable... and very much the same

feelings of the family of Renee Good and others harmed by federal agents.

We all want safety. We all want peace. We all insist criminal violence of all kinds be addressed. End the destructive practices of ICE. Create common-sense immigration policies and accountability for ICE, and demand full compliance to the Constitution of the United States.

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF LAURA WILKERSON

Ms. WILKERSON. Thank you for having me here today to tell you the story of my son, Joshua. My husband and I raised three children, and Josh was the baby of our family. He was 18 years old and a senior in high school. A classmate of his asked him for a ride home and, unbeknownst to him, that classmate wanted to murder Josh so that he could scrap his truck for some money.

Instead of getting Josh home that day, we got an autopsy report that explained just exactly how Josh died. There were three manners of death: Abdomen trauma, head trauma, and strangulation. I guess I feel lucky that he was dead before he was set on fire.

This creates a hole in a family like you can never imagine. It will never be repaired here. Our lives will be different. It is like a bomb was dropped in our family. Even if we could pick up the pieces, you can't put them back together, right?

I am OK with where Josh is at today. What I am not OK with are the lies that I am hearing as I sit here sometimes.

Josh deserved to live. His brother was defending this country in the Air Force. He got to come home for two weeks to bury his little brother and then go back to defending this country and put his grief on the shelf. Now, that he is out, he deals with things later and it affects our family in every single way.

The lies I want to talk about today are what I am hearing from Ms. Crockett and Mr. Raskin about I think you said there's potential terrorists roaming the streets. Those are due to sanctuary city policies. You invited the criminal element to, hey, come to our city and we are going to give you a sanctuary. What are you giving them a sanctuary from? The law? Who else gets sanctuary from the law? Do I get it? You feel sympathy for me? I am never going to be the same. Can I go do what I want to do and get sanctuary from the law?

I can't even understand how you can say you are inviting the criminal element to come to your city and what you are doing is putting them over the citizens, the ones that are supposed to be voting for you, although we know illegals vote in the elections. Failed policies are under Obama inviting, opening the U.S. border to any and everybody, allowing them without vetting them, and shipping them off to other parts of the country so that they can vote in that area, giving them driver's licenses, giving them social security cards, allowing them to be citizens without being citizens and vote for a certain party.

The lies about what you are saying are just that—they're lies. They can protest and, as far as Ms. Good's family, walk down the street all day long with a protest sign, walk down it all day long. You can fix it by telling them you can't get in the middle of a law enforcement investigation. I don't care how bad you think the policy is wrong. Don't get in the middle of an investigation of law enforcement. That would be the first way not to die if you want a simple protest.

Antifa is not peaceful protesting. Those are the lies. It is lie after lie after lie after lie. None of you care about these people. You don't care about my kid. You don't care about theirs. You don't care about Ms. Good. It just suits you. It is frustrating to hear the lies after lies after lies, and it is over and over and over.

I had hoped at my testimony 10 years ago, I wouldn't have to meet new families like this. Boy, I was so naive. We are still talking about giving sanctuary to people that broke the law. What about the people that stood in line and did it the hard way? Wrote letters home to their home country and said, "look, we made it to America." They didn't know how to speak the language. They didn't have a car. They didn't have a lot of money. They did it the right way, and they were granted the American dream. Many of them accomplished that. What about those people you are letting in; in front of those people? How does that make sense in your eyes? How do you sleep at night saying you are gonna give sanctuary to people who broke into this country?

I don't know how you sleep at night, but what I do know is you don't care about our kids. They are collateral damage in the things that you want to happen. That is all they are. They are collateral damage. You can tell me about the sympathy, and I believe your sympathy. You don't want anybody to die. I understand that. Think about if it is your kid. You got any grandkids? You got kids? Think about your baby, a baby in your family, and think about in an hour you may have to go home watch or listen to your wife tell you that your son didn't come home from school today because he was beaten and tortured and set on fire by somebody that didn't need to be in this country.

His parents had overstayed a visa. His father was given a Social Security card and a driver's license so that he could work, and he overstayed that visa. Then, he brought his whole family here without a visa to come in illegally. That is what I am mad about. If you really cared about this, you would stand up and quit calling for sanctuary cities. It makes no sense.

All you're doing is trying to put people that have come into the country illegally before American citizens, especially even about the Renee Good. I feel for their family. They have lost a family member through no fault of their own, but she chose to go there that day. She chose to aim her car at a policeman. If she chose those actions, that got her killed. ICE isn't just deciding who to pick up. They are going after criminals in this country, and, if you're in the middle of that and you get in the middle of it and you want to go out there and tell them they shouldn't be doing it and you are an illegal, pick you up, too. Sorry. That's just the way it has to be.

President Trump and Tom Homan and the Border Patrol have stopped the leak of illegal immigration in this country. It is ICE's job to clean up the dang mess. It is going to be hard. There are going to be casualties. There are going to be unhappy people and families that are hurting. I say if you are not putting your kids six feet under the dirt and turning around and walking away from the cemetery, you will be all right.

Stop the nonsense. Stop it. It is time to clean up the mess of what happened under the last few administrations. I really don't care if they are unhappy. I am so grateful they could go home and see their kid, or they can FaceTime their kid in another country or the kid here can FaceTime. Their parents put them in that situation. Their parents brought him over or brought them over there when they were young. I understand it is no fault of the kids, but their parents put him that situation. You have parents in other

countries that come here illegally and then they call for some yahoo to transport their kid across the border to join them. They don't care if they get raped all along the way because that's what happens. We know it, I know it, and you know it.

Mr. VAN DREW. Ms. Wilkerson, I could listen to you all day, and I mean it. I could. Your time has expired. I have been very lenient. You are about 1½ minutes over.

Ms. WILKERSON. Sorry.

Mr. VAN DREW. No, don't be sorry. I am sorry I have to say this, but if you could wrap it up. Your entire testimony, anything else you have to say, will be put in the permanent record.

Ms. WILKERSON. Thank you. Thank you for listening to me. I just want you to know that the leak has been stopped. Continue to fight to clean up the mess. Stop the nonsense of sanctuary cities.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wilkerson follows:]

Testimony of Laura Wilkerson

Congress of the United States

Committee on the Judiciary

Hearing on the Human Toll of Sanctuary Cities

My name is Laura Wilkerson.

I am here to testify about the toll on families that sanctuary cities create. I lost my son, Joshua Aaron Wilkerson, to murder. He was killed by an illegal alien. There were three manners of death: abdomen trauma, head trauma, and strangulation.

As a mom, this created a hole in me that will never be fully repaired. A bomb was dropped on my family, and pieces are scattered everywhere. Even if we could pick up all of the pieces, they will never fully be restored. My heart was broken in a way that can't be described.

No one is allowed "sanctuary" from the law.

Please feel free to ask me any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Laura Wilkerson

Josh's mom.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Ms. Wilkerson. We are going to now proceed under the five-minute rule with questions for those on the panel, and we are going to start with Mr. Schmidt from the State of Kansas.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank all our witnesses for being here and for not just taking your time but for giving your hearts. We are grateful for sharing your stories because it makes it real for people who are watching and who will read this record and who understand that this is more than a policy debate. Thank you for your time.

Let me start with this direction. Ms. Wilkerson, let me start with you. I am sorry, I didn't catch, where is your home State?

Ms. WILKERSON. It was Houston, Texas.

Mr. SCHMIDT. In Texas.

Ms. WILKERSON. I live just outside of Houston, yes.

Mr. SCHMIDT. What happened to the person who killed your child?

Ms. WILKERSON. I got justice in a court of law, probably because it was in Texas. He could have gotten between 5–99 years. He received 99 years, and that means he has to serve 30 years before he comes up for parole. We have about another 15 years before I have to start fighting not to let him out—him getting out of jail.

I am grateful that he got some justice. I know so many parents don't get that.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Ms. Heiling, may I ask you the same question? What happened to the person who killed your child?

Ms. HEILING. Brady and Hallie had their crash happen this past July. We have been pushed off and pushed off. Things take time, we're told. This is just how it works. Be patient. Try to raise your family, try to go about your life, but be patient. We are still living this justice you speak of.

Mr. SCHMIDT. How old was Brady?

Ms. HEILING. He was 19, and Hallie was 18.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Brady looked like quite an athlete from the photos.

Ms. HEILING. Brady and Hallie were both amazing athletes. Brady turned down scholarships to stay home and support Hallie in her athletics. They were going to start college together in about two weeks. All their college belongings are still in their rooms in our basements, just like they're going to come back and we're going to send them off someday.

You are right. He looked like an amazing athlete because he was. He is a very special boy to a lot of people that know him and that don't know him. He has made a huge impact.

Mr. SCHMIDT. I saw what looked like football photos. Was he a multisport athlete?

Ms. HEILING. Brady played football mainly. He was a State track athlete. He ran relays and threw the shot put. He went two years in a row to the State competition, and he weight trained in between times. As you can see by the size of his biceps, he never missed a workout session. He was very self-disciplined. He was very much a rule follower. To die in the way he did, innocently, trying to get home, the rule follower in him was screaming at the top of his lungs this woman is drunk, she's driving the wrong way, I

don't have time to react. Why wasn't she home with her own family taking care of them, sparing my child?

Mr. SCHMIDT. Where were they going to go to college?

Ms. HEILING. They were going to go over to South Dakota to Lake Area Tech. He was planning on opening a diesel mechanic shop at our house. We just finished building. Him and his dad had spent the whole summer. They own semis and excavating equipment. They do a lot of dirt work and truck hauling, and he was going to open that shop to be able to service all those trucks.

Like I said, he was very independently driven, had lots of goals. He had a plan for him and Hallie. It was a little different than what he was anticipating.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. HEILING. You are welcome.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Ms. Fox, what happened to the person who hit your daughter?

Ms. FOX. I contacted the VOICE, Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement, back in January. After our seventh arraignment, she took the plea, pleading guilty to Class 5 felony, conspiracy to flee the scene of an accident with severe bodily injury. I filed a report with VOICE, and we received news that she has since been deported. February 28th, it was confirmed that she is back in Venezuela.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Each of the three of you had interaction with the criminal justice system after the crimes that injured or killed your children. Since this all happened, to each of the three mothers just quickly, has anybody who engaged in the policies that let those people stay in this country illegally beforehand, has anybody contacted you and expressed sympathy or apologized to you?

Ms. HEILING. No. We have heard from one politician from our local area expressing his sincere condolences, but we have heard nothing about anything that was done wrong in justice, as much as Ms. Renee Good has received.

Ms. WILKERSON. I had several Republicans express their sympathy, but most of the others just wanted to look away and they are not emotionally strong enough to look at it, let alone live through it, but they are not going to change a policy. That is why I fully believe that our kids are just collateral damage.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Thank you. My time is expired, Mr. Chair. I just want to say we are very sorry that our country let this happen to you.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Mr. Schmidt. I recognize the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Hank Johnson.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am so sorry for what has happened to your children. I cannot imagine what you have gone through, and no parent should have to go through what you have gone through. All victims of violent crime deserve justice, but this hearing is not about justice.

It is entitled, "The Human Toll of Sanctuary Policies: Stories From Victims and Families." We could very well have done a hearing on the human toll of the Trump-MAGA tax cuts on 17 million Americans who got their healthcare access and food security ripped out from under them so that the wealthiest billionaires in this country could get another tax cut, or we could have entitled this

hearing or had a hearing on the human toll of Trump's stupid war with Iran and how it is making life increasingly unaffordable for people here in America except for the wealthiest Americans—they can pay whatever the price is. We could have had a hearing on the human toll of Trump's desperate cover-up of the Epstein files, the toll that has played on the victims of that international child sex-abuse ring. No, we are here today, and not to cast any aspersions on any of you for testifying, but this is a Steve Miller-approved hearing whose sole aim is to stir up passion and bias and prejudice against immigrants who are people of color.

Now, we have had mass murder after mass murder in this country perpetrated by all kinds of people, but I just want to talk about those that have been perpetrated by White males. Robert Card opened fire at a bowling alley in Lewiston, Maine, killing 18 people and wounding 13. Payton Gendron, a White supremacist, killed 10 people in a racist attack at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York. Randy Stair, a 32-year-old, suspected of killing a family of four in Romeoville, Illinois. Richard Dale Crum, a 52-year-old man in Arkabutla, Mississippi, who shot and killed six people, including his ex-wife and stepfather. The 38-year-old Courtney Gordon who stabbed four relatives, including two children, to death in New York City. I could go on and on in terms of tragedies and victims of tragedy who could be brought here to talk about this MAGA Republican failure to do anything about gun control.

Even the fact that, Mr. Romanucci, you are seated No. 3 instead of No. 4, normally the three Republican witnesses would be seated together, not sandwiching the Democratic witness, in between you. You got sandwiched today for the dramatic effect of it. It is all politics, and it is unfortunate what my friends here on the other side of the aisle are perpetrating.

Mr. Romanucci, the killing of Ms. Good was by rogue ICE officers, Federal agents, who can't even be sued for the damage that they have done to your client's loved ones. That is wrong. That is why I've introduced the Bivens Act, which would allow people to bring Federal officials into court and sue them against these egregious actions. There are many. Certainly, they equate. I am not minimizing the tragedy that is before us today with you three women, but these other tragedies at the hands of nonimmigrants is just as important.

My Bivens Act would ensure that all victims and their loved ones can get justice, even if the perpetrator is a government official. That is why I've also introduced the Constitutional Accountability Act, which would establish that Federal, State, and local governments have the same respondent superior liability that private employers have for their employees.

There is much we can do to bring justice to those who have been aggrieved by tragedy. This MAGA Republican Congress is incapable and unwilling to do anything in that regard, and that is unfortunate.

I am going to be the one who yields back after going only 11 minutes over. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Mr. Johnson. Yes, that was 11 seconds over. In 11 minutes, I would have been tapping the gavel. With that, Mr. Schmidt.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have some unanimous consent requests.

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

Mr. SCHMIDT. I would ask unanimous consent to include in the record an article titled, "ICE Asks Governor Pritzker and Chicago Sanctuary Politicians to Not Release Criminal Illegal Alien Accused of Killing 18-year-old Loyola College Student."

Also, an article titled, "Mayor Frey's Sanctuary Policies Release Criminal Illegal Aliens from Jails Back into Minneapolis Streets to Terrorize More Innocent Americans."

Also, unanimous consent to include in the record an article titled, "Illinois Father Says Pritzker Shows 'Indifference' to His Daughter Being Killed by Illegal Immigrant."

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. CROCKETT. Mr. Chair, I have a UC.

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

Ms. CROCKETT. This is from the *Texas Tribune*. It is from March 29th, actually my birthday, 2010. "Houston, no sanctuary, Annise Parker, Says," who was the mayor at the time.

Ms. WILKERSON. Can I respond to that?

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you. You know what? Mr. Gill is going to speak next, and he is going to yield some of his time to you. Is that OK?

Ms. WILKERSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. VAN DREW. With that, I recognize Mr. Gill.

Mr. GILL. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for holding this hearing. Thank you to the witnesses for coming here and telling us your stories and your families' stories. Before we get into that, it is worth saying that was one of the most disgusting testimoneys I have ever heard. To have Hank come in here and lecture Angel Families about how they shouldn't be here, how we shouldn't be holding this hearing. What the hell is wrong with you guys? The reason they are here is because of open borders that you guys perpetrated for four years. To come in here and to turn this into a MAGA Republican idiotic low IQ lecture is sickening. To whine about which seats they are in, it is disgusting.

That said, I'd like to give you guys a chance to respond to some of the things that you have heard. I will start with you, Ms. Wilkerson.

Ms. WILKERSON. Thank you. I just wanted to say that it was a spoken policy of Houston to be a sanctuary. It wasn't written at that point. The suburbs around Houston followed that same policy. Annise Parker is kind of laughable to me.

This hearing could also be about why we are not or people aren't voting. There is a slush fund for people up here in these places that have committed crimes or people have said, oh, you've raped and stuff. This hearing could have been about that, too, but it is not. It is about our kids that we lost and about the very fact that sanctuary city policies is creating a haven for people that came to this country illegally. Thank you.

Ms. HEILING. You can put me in whatever order, in whatever seat. My tragedy is never going to be OK. I will be last. I will be first. I will be 42nd seat, if that is what you want. We are so used

to hearing everyone tell us, but we are sorry, please hear our condolences, but this hearing should be about this, this hearing should be about me. It is not. Today is our day. Hear us. Leave your butts in your seat. I don't wanna hear your butts. Our tragedies are disgusting.

I still wait for my children to come home. It is not real to me. My 11-year-old, my 16-year-old, they are waiting for their car to come home with Brady and Hallie in it because guess what? It is evidence. We can't have that back yet. My garage door is empty. The girls say, mom, we still think they are gonna come home and tell us all about the concert and celebrating their anniversary because the car is not here. They will come home, won't they?

We can't pick a headstone because that makes it too real, but you can sit here and tell us about what kind of hearing this should be. Renee Good is not the same as Angel Families. She made a choice. She left her home that day, made the choice. Brady and Hallie didn't get a choice. Carissa didn't get a choice. Joshua didn't get a choice. They are living American laws, the American dream. They were trying to make this place better, and they were stolen by somebody who doesn't care. Give me all your butts, I am used to it.

Ms. FOX. I don't know if anybody has noticed, but I am not White. I wake up Brown every day. I am not sure what race has to do with any of this. Four. There are four kids that we talked about today, and you all can't seem to stay on topic for what, an hour of your time. You got to bring up what about, what about, what about.

No. We are talking about these four kids. We are talking about Angel Families. Stay on topic. I don't want to talk about Epstein right now. That is another hearing. I don't want to talk about ICE detainees. That is another hearing. Right now, today, we are talking about sanctuary policies and how they have wrecked our families.

You all come and you all feed Carissa. You get her up from her bed using a crane, and then you tell me and lecture me what this hearing should be about.

Mr. GILL. Ms. Wilkerson, we have a little bit more time. Would you like to have the floor to respond to anything else you've heard today?

Ms. WILKERSON. I just have to agree with them both. This hearing could be about anything, and I appreciate that they want to get some things on record, but it is not what it is about today. It is about American citizens whose parents try to do the right thing.

I stayed at-home mom because I wanted to give Josh my values, my kids my values and teach them right from wrong and take them to church. You get almost through to that point, and then somebody that shouldn't even have been here just steals their life right out from under you. You will never understand the pain. I pray that you don't understand the pain.

It is about giving a group of people sanctuary from the law. Nobody gets sanctuary from the law. It is absolutely ridiculous. It is hard to believe we are sitting here begging you to obey the laws that you all made. There are laws in the books. If we just start with that, we would be better off if we just start enforcing those. Nobody gets sanctuary from the law. How to stay, how to not get

killed by the police, don't get involved in something they are doing. It is pretty much commonsense.

I want it to remain about the kids, American citizens that have been lost. I think this gentleman over here, Mr. Johnson, said that you could fill this room. You could fill stadiums. They don't keep statistics. They don't want statistics. They don't want you to know how many people—

Mr. VAN DREW. Ms. Wilkerson, I'm sorry. I get to be the bad guy today. I don't mean to be. I really could listen to all of you all day. I am trying, as Chair, to get it under control. We have let everybody on both sides—

Ms. WILKERSON. Thank you. No problem. I can talk for—

Mr. VAN DREW. I know, I know. I thank you for that. Does the gentleman yield back?

Mr. GILL. Yes, I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you. I thank the gentleman. With that, I recognize the Ranking Member, Jasmine Crockett.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much. I hear your rage. I don't have children and literally have never lost a child, nor have one injured, to actually really be in your shoes. One thing that I can tell you about the redirection is because so often what we see happen is politicians play games. The reality is that if you are talking about a sanctuary city, then we are talking about city government. We are talking about local control, something that the Republicans used to espouse that they believed in. They used to believe in whoever lives in that city, you elect who is going to run that city. That city, whether it is the police department, which it is the police department and law enforcement that make the decisions about what they do. We don't pick the police chief for any given city, not on the Federal level. That comes from the city level. That comes from whoever the people of that city actually elect to represent them. I believe in local control.

Same thing. I live in Texas, too; and, baby, I wish I didn't have to deal with Governor Greg Abbott. Local control dictates that he is the Governor of our State; and, therefore, we have State reps, we have State Senators, and we have a Governor, and we have county elected officials and city elected officials. We are sitting in Washington, DC, right now. We are on the Federal level.

What I believe in is something that the Republicans used to scream, which is local control. When we're having a conversation and a hearing about the human toll, the title specifically is the "Human Toll of Sanctuary Policies: Stories from Victims and Families," my deal is we aren't the ones that decide what cities do.

What they have decided to do is they have decided to play on your pain, and that is why I am frustrated. Because hear me when I say this: I have seen people, whether it was an American citizen or not that killed your child or harmed your child, I believe it is wrong. To me, it wouldn't have made it any less painful, and I could be wrong again because I don't have any kids, but if, for some reason, it had been a U.S. citizen that ended up harming or killing your child, the pain would still be there. It would still hurt. The reality is that what we need to do is make sure we are protecting everybody in this country.

I don't wake up and somehow people look and see that there's a "D" somewhere around my head or something; and so, therefore, I am going to somehow be precluded from harm becoming me. When I go out to do policy work—and I have worked on the State level, too. The policies that I was writing when I was on the State level are different from the Federal level because we have different levels of control.

The one thing that we do have control of you may have recognized that the DHS secretary, as we're talking about immigration, had to come before this Committee. I want to say maybe a day or two after she came before our Committee—because we have jurisdiction over her. We don't have jurisdiction over your mayors. We have jurisdiction over her. She lost her job. The DHS secretary is gone. Now, to be clear about this, the Republican President is the one that put her out of her job because she was failing.

The reason that my colleagues have brought these things up—and this isn't to say that the harm and the hurt that you are feeling, that you should not be feeling that. It is wrong. Again, even as a criminal defense attorney, I can't tell you how many times I was begging clients to enter pleas.

In fact, it literally made me remember a case that I had with a guy who was a veteran. He had served this country. He ended up being put on some new medication, and he also ended up drinking with that medication. Now, the medication had a warning on the bottle, but he went out, he drove, and he killed someone's mother. That client told me he had no criminal history. He told me over and over and over, he said, "just give me whatever they are going to give me." They offered him the max, which was 20 years, and I could not, in good conscience, knowing that a jury would not give him the max.

The only reason we went to trial is because the prosecutor wanted to be so greedy. That jury did not give him 20 years. He was willing to take 15 years.

I am here to tell you that it is never right to break any of our laws. The reason that we have gone down the line and the reason that we brought Mr. Romanucci is because we actually have control over CBP, DHS, and ICE. It's just that these guys don't want to exacerbate, use that control. They sit there and they allow U.S. citizens and non-U.S. citizens to have their rights violated, and that is something within our purview.

If I lived in one of your cities—in fact, I am in Dallas. Dallas has a Republican mayor. To be a sanctuary city doesn't necessarily mean that you provide sanctuary. It means that you are not going to do the Federal Government's job. That is what it means. They are local law enforcement. What it means is that they are not going to sit there and do the job of Federal agents. That is what a sanctuary city means.

To be clear again, and I have more articles, the city of Houston was not—when you talk about someone being a sanctuary city, it is an official policy that they are following. It can't be that it is one person. It is the official policy of the city. Otherwise, it doesn't work if it is just one person.

I will yield. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for your indulgence.

Mr. VAN DREW. Sure. Yes, the gentleman is recognized.

Mr. GILL. Thank God she won't be back next Congress, but I would like to ask for unanimous consent to enter into the record a few different things. First, "ICE agent struck by Renee Good's vehicle suffered internal bleeding to torso, DHS says."

Next, "DHS reaches more than 4,000 arrests of illegal aliens, including murderers, sex offenders, gang members, and terrorists in Minnesota since Operation Metro Search began."

Another, "UPDATE, DHS deploys special operations after multiple violent attacks on Federal law enforcement by domestic terrorists in Chicago."

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection. I recognize myself for five minutes. I want to thank you all for being here, even you, Mr. Romanucci. Thank you.

Mr. ROMANUCCI. Thank you.

Mr. VAN DREW. I know it is hard to believe—I don't have the words. I don't have the words. It is hard to believe that there are people in politics who give a damn. I swear to God there are. I am not going to comment on the other side; I am not going to talk about Republicans and Democrats. I am not going to talk about Epstein. I am not going to talk about all the politics that is swirling around.

Because so much of it, a lot of times, is BS. You know that because you have lived it. You have had to sit in hearings, talk to reporters, talk to politicians, and hear all this crap. I can speak for me, and I know there is other Members sitting up here, if you could feel our hearts, I swear to God. I know I said in the beginning it is not enough. I only can say I am sorry.

You guys did a good job. You did a good job. This isn't alligator tears or any BS. I admire you for what you have done. It is a big deal. It is as hard on you because you have somebody that is so incapacitated, and you are there every day. Thank you for what you do because your love is so great.

The three of you have so much faith. That is the one thing I got out of this. Thank you for that, as well.

We talked today about, and I respect the Ranking Member, about local government. Yes, it is local governments that are doing this. It is States and it is cities, but they are breaking the law. They are breaking Federal law. You all said it; frankly, we have had legislation that has come before us that we have voted for, but it is not going to make it all the way through. Not enough people voted for it, that those cities, those towns, those counties, those States don't get their funding. You want to see politicians run? Man, you take away the money that they get, they are going to run.

Yes, there are States' rights. I believe in the individuality of the States' rights and how our constitution was set up. First, it doesn't allow you to break Federal law. Second, we had wide open borders, man; we just did. This isn't a political debate. Nobody is going to vote for or against me on anything in this room today, but we did. We let really bad people in. Somebody, one of our Members, said, well, "tragedies happen and it could have been an American citizen who did that." Yes, we couldn't help that because they are an American citizen. How do we know? You don't know when you wake up in the morning what somebody's going to do to you or to your family, your children, whatever.

This was preventable. That is the word here. You broke the law. They broke the law, and it was preventable. It didn't have to be that way. We have talked about it for years.

I love immigrants. I love legal immigrants. Many of us, our parents, our grandparents, and our great grandparents came here. They busted their ass to make a living and to do the right thing and to be responsible. They were good people. That is not what we are talking about here.

An aspect of all this that we have didn't even mention is how much this cost us. Who cares about the money when you think a human life. Even beyond that, some of these people we have to transport, we have to feed them, we have to house them, and we have to educate them. It is nothing against immigrants, and it is not trying to hurt anybody. They broke the law and some of them are Godawful. Those statistics that everybody has read today, they are real. It is not three or four. It is thousands and millions were let in our country. No country has ever prevailed in all world history when it just bleeds open like that.

This hearing, more importantly than the politics, liberal, conservative, Republican, and Democrat, I just wanted people to hear. I wish every American, I swear to God, so they didn't have to hear us, but I wish they could just hear you. It's why your job is so hard because you know what? Let me tell, truth be told, yes, we will do some news hits maybe. Mr. Schmidt will get interviewed or I will get interviewed or Jasmine will get interviewed. A lot of people aren't going to know what happened here today. They're not. You have to keep pushing, and you have to keep working. I want you to know, and I mean this, forget the BS politics. A lot of people love you for what you have done and the courage you have shown. You didn't have to do it. This is a pain coming here, and you really live that pain every single time you do it and you don't know who is telling you the truth and who is BS'ing you. There are people who care, and I pray to God that someday this works out and we don't keep doing this.

I thank you for that. I had a bunch of questions. I don't even have the time.

Mr. ROMANUCCI. Mr. Chair, may I be recognized for 30 seconds?

Mr. VAN DREW. Yes, you may.

Mr. ROMANUCCI. Thank you so much. First, whether it was by intentional or by happenstance, I embrace the position where I am sitting. I hug Moms like you all the time, and I do feel your pain. I am fine with where I sit in my position.

Chair, you are powerful. When you asked us to stand and say the Pledge of Allegiance, we all followed you, and the last words that we said were liberty and justice for all. I am an advocate, and that is what I believe in, and I am asking this Congress, this Committee, to find a commonsense approach to immigration so that we don't have to do this again. You don't have to come back here in a year or 10 years. Ever. Thank you.

Ms. HEILING. Thirty seconds for me. Just to answer—

Mr. VAN DREW. I probably broke—by the way, they are not laws. I probably broke all kinds of rules today, just so you know, and I don't care.

Ms. HEILING. When Ms. Crockett said she doesn't have children, so she doesn't know, we are not wired to process the type of tragedy that we are living. We are not. There are no words. I will tell you it does feel different when an illegal immigrant kills your children than it does an American because it was preventable. It feels different, not that I know that because I have had an American kill a child. When something is preventable and your life is ruined from something that is preventable, it does hit a little different than what I would imagine it would feel like just a regular casualty.

Loss, in itself, is so difficult, there is no words. Loss is loss. It is very tragic. What we are dealing with, when it is preventable, when these people have done something and they weren't asked to leave, if I were to go to Honduras where the woman who killed our children is from and I would kill two teenagers there, I am not getting any rights from the Hondurans. They are not giving me rights. It is different. This is preventable.

I say it does hit a little differently when our tragedy is preventable.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you. Thank you. Mr. Schmidt.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Thank you, Mr. Chair. In addition to our witnesses today, we have others who wish to be sure the Committee of the record know their stories. They were unable to testify, so I have some unanimous consent requests—

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

Mr. SCHMIDT. I would like to enter into the record a statement from Zoey Heiling, the sister of Brady Heiling. I would like to enter into the record a statement from Korri Heiling, the sister of Brady Heiling; a statement from John and Deborah Hosek, I believe, the grandparents; a statement from Agnes Gibboney, an Angel Mom; a statement from Joe Abraham, an Angel Parent.

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection.

Mr. SCHMIDT. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Mr. Schmidt. That concludes—oh, I'm sorry.

Ms. CROCKETT. Sorry. One more UC. This is from the *Houston Chronicle*, "Houston is not a city by the definition." This is from June 30, 2006. More specifically, just if you will indulge me for two seconds to actually read something that is actually a part of the article, it says that, "Houston police are required to check the warrant status of everyone who is ticketed, arrested, or jailed . . ."

Mr. GILL. I don't think it is in order for you to be reading articles here.

Mr. VAN DREW. We are going to give her leeway. Don't argue. Just finish.

Ms. CROCKETT. Because you know I'm ready to—OK. "ICE officials are given full access to city jails . . ."

Mr. VAN DREW. Without objection, without objection.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. VAN DREW. OK. That concludes today's hearing. We thank our witnesses for appearing before the Committee today. Without objection, all Members do have five legislative days to submit additional written questions for the witnesses or additional materials for the record.

Without objection, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 4:24 p.m.]

All materials submitted for the record by Members of the Subcommittee on Oversight can be found at: *<https://docs.house.gov/Committee/Calendar/ByEvent.aspx?EventID=119166>*.

