



CHELLIE PINGREE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
1ST DISTRICT MAINE

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CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY

September 16, 2025

Todd M. Lyons
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Acting Director Lyons,

I write to express grave concern and outrage over recent actions by federal law enforcement agents detaining a parent during the student drop-off period for Gerald E. Talbot Community School in Portland, Maine. According to reports, this occurred just before 8 a.m. on the school's access road. This road is located immediately next to the school, and the school is the only location accessible by the road.

The proximity of the enforcement activity to the school raises serious questions about its justification, its impact on the school community, and whether appropriate oversight and approvals were secured. It is difficult to imagine any circumstance that could justify staging enforcement activity when children are arriving to learn. Beyond the harm it causes the community at-large, these actions have caused irreparable damage to the family, who is already dealing with difficult circumstances.

Studies show that immigration enforcement near schools triggers measurable harm: lower attendance¹, diminished academic performance², increased anxiety and depression³, and lasting trauma for students

¹ Kirksey, J. Jacob, and Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj. "Immigration Arrests and Educational Impacts: Linking ICE Arrests to Declines in Achievement, Attendance, and School Climate and Safety in California." *AERA Open*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2021, pp. 1-17, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/23328584211039787>.

² Gándara, Patricia, and Jongyeon Ee. *Schools Under Siege: The Impact of Immigration Enforcement on Educational Equity*. Harvard Education Press, 2021.

³ Cardoso, Jodi Berger, et al. "Immigration Enforcement Fear and Anxiety in Latinx High School Students: The Indirect Effect of Perceived Discrimination." *J Adolesc Health*, vol. 68, no. 5, 2021, pp. 961-968, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33139180/>.



and families⁴ – including those not directly targeted. Children who witness or even hear of immigration arrests near their schools experience fear that undermines their ability to learn and thrive. These findings are exactly why the sensitive locations guidance and policies have repeatedly emphasized the need to shield schools from immigration enforcement activity. Portland Public School officials have already reported a decrease in attendance to my office.

In addition to my concerns regarding the proximity to a school are the deeply unsettling reports that the arresting officers were unidentifiable, driving unmarked cars, and refused to state which agency they represented when asked by the school district administrator. Not only did these present challenges for the school administrators and the family members, but it caused confusion among local law enforcement who were not informed of the activity. Above all, no person should be swept up off the streets by masked and unidentifiable members of law enforcement.

I demand a full accounting of this operation, including which agencies were involved, what coordination occurred between those agencies, and the justification for selecting the school as a location for enforcement activity. In particular, I request a written explanation of any review or retraining that occurs from this incident; a description of the guidance used to determine whether enforcement activity at schools is absolutely necessary; and a list of protocols adapted to minimize harm done to the community while practicing said enforcement activity.

Families entrust their children to schools expecting that the federal government will not bring political theater to the schoolhouse gate, especially if such activity could conceivably happen elsewhere. I expect your prompt and complete response as well as your assurances that Portland's students, and students across the country, will be protected from similar exposure in the future. Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

⁴ Dreby, Joanna, et al. "The Anatomy of Immigration Enforcement: Long-Standing Socio-Emotional Impacts on Children as They Age Into Adulthood." *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 84, no. 3, 2022, pp. 713-733, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jomf.12830>.