

Keep ICE out of schools, hospitals, and places of worship

Freedom and safety are being taken from our children.

Before policy debates and legislative language, there are children.

At its core, this crisis is about freedom and safety, two promises every child in America should be guaranteed. Right now, in Minnesota and communities across the country, **children are not free to go to school, walk home, play outside, or access healthcare without fear.** And communities are not safer as a result of aggressive immigration enforcement near schools and care spaces; they are more destabilized, traumatized, and divided.

In Minneapolis, parents watched in horror as their children's school bus was filled with tear gas on the way home from school – not because of anything the children did, but because ICE was conducting aggressive enforcement so close to schools that kids were caught directly in the line of fire. Families describe feeling powerless as their children experienced fear and physical exposure during what should have been a normal ride home.

In response, parents have organized volunteer patrols through faith communities to protect children from intimidation near school playgrounds. ICE agents have reportedly set up monitoring areas in parking lots directly across the street, within feet of children. In Saint Paul, families have formed parent walking patrols so children aren't alone on their way to school because ICE agents have followed students on their daily routes. Teachers report seeing ICE agents with binoculars monitoring school hallways and corridors. Children describe seeing heavily armed, masked personnel near their classrooms, parks, and playgrounds. Schools, places meant for learning and safety, have become sites of fear.



U.S. Border Patrol agents detain a person on the ground near Roosevelt High School during dismissal time on Jan. 7 in Minneapolis.  Kerem Yücel | MPR News

The impact is immediate and devastating, and it threatens freedom and safety at the same time. **Administrators are spending more time creating emergency safety plans for transportation, managing staffing shortages, and responding to attendance rates dropping to 30 to 40% than on building a thriving learning environment.**

Children with disabilities are being hit especially hard. Families are keeping children with special needs home out of fear, cutting them off from legally required educational services, therapies, and medical appointments. These disruptions don't just affect today; they risk erasing years of developmental progress.

What's happening in Washington?

Congress passed 11 of the 12 federal appropriations bills needed to fund the government through FY26. These include bipartisan wins, protecting the Department of Education and maintaining level funding for schools. **One bill remains: the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations bill.**

Following the murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, Democrats refused to advance DHS funding without meaningful immigration reforms. As a result, Congress passed a two week Continuing Resolution (CR)- temporarily funding the government while negotiations continue.

Senate Democrats have proposed commonsense guardrails, including:

- Ending roving ICE patrols and tightening warrant requirements
- Establishing a uniform federal code of conduct, especially around use of force
- Requiring agents to clearly identify themselves ("masks off, body cameras on")

What's missing: explicit and enforceable protections for schools, hospitals, and places of worship.

For decades, administrations of both parties recognized these as sensitive locations. Those protections were revoked by the Trump Administration and must be restored to protect kids trying to attend our nation's schools.

As negotiations continue, it's critical that Congress **hold the line on ICE reforms already proposed** and strengthen the bill with **clear, enforceable protections for schools, hospitals, and places of worship.**

Why this matters to every community: Freedom & safety are at stake

The Trump Administration has publicly threatened similar crackdowns to Minnesota in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Any city, suburb, or rural community could become the next target.

Without clear protections, communities face a dangerous erosion of both freedom and safety:

- **Increased fear and instability for families:** Without strong protections, ICE raids near schools, hospitals, and other essential community spaces can deter families from accessing education, healthcare, nutrition programs, and emergency services.
- **Schools caught in the middle:** Educators and school leaders should never have to worry that ICE activity will disrupt classrooms, attendance, or family engagement. Following immigration raids in California's Central Valley, daily student absences increased by 22%. Now across Minnesota, attendance is plummeting by over 80% in some districts, with several schools shutting down in-person learning entirely. When schools are not treated as safe spaces, student learning and wellbeing suffer.
- **Breakdown of community support systems:** In Minnesota, masked and often unidentifiable ICE agents are not only targeting immigrants but also tracking and intimidating volunteers who are trying to help, including those delivering food or supplies. The erosion of mutual aid makes it even harder for families to stay afloat during this crisis.

Why schools, hospitals, and places of worship must be protected

These spaces exist to serve the public good. Immigration enforcement in or near them creates a **chilling effect far beyond any single enforcement action**. Families are pulling children out of school, skipping medical appointments, and avoiding reporting crimes or emergencies out of fear-making communities less healthy, less safe, and less stable. Schools have become sites of fear and trauma, with ICE agents circling school buildings, stalking school drop-off lines, and stopping school buses. Clear, enforceable protections for schools and hospitals must remain a priority in order to protect child welfare and public safety. ICE agents circling school buildings, stalking drop-off lines, and stopping school buses does not make communities safer. It destabilizes them.

Protecting these spaces is not about politics, it's about freedom, child welfare, and real public safety.

What happens next

Congress has two weeks to finalize DHS funding before a shutdown deadline. Your voice matters – especially right now.

Urge lawmakers to:

- Hold the line on existing ICE reforms suggested by Democratic leadership
- Strengthen the bill with **clear, enforceable protections for schools, hospitals, and places of worship**

Failure to act leaves children, families, educators, and service providers exposed to enforcement practices that cause real harm.

Email/Call Script:

(Adapt as needed—personal stories are powerful.)

Dear [Senator / Representative / Staffer Name],

Children in our communities are losing both freedom and safety as a result of unchecked immigration enforcement near schools and care spaces. **I am writing as a [parent / educator / advocate / community leader] to urge you to include strong restrictions on ICE activity in the Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill.**

Just weeks into 2026, immigration enforcement has escalated dramatically. Families are living in fear. Schools—once safe spaces—are becoming sites of trauma. Children are afraid to attend class, parents are pulling kids out of school, and attendance is collapsing in some districts.

As Congress finalizes DHS funding, it is critical that any funding for ICE and CBP include strong oversight and clear limits. I urge you to support commonsense reforms already proposed, including ending roving patrols, enforcing a uniform code of conduct, and requiring agents to identify themselves with body cameras on and masks off.

But these reforms are not enough. **Congress must include explicit, enforceable protections for schools, hospitals, and places of worship.** We cannot allow children to relive the harms of prolonged school disruption. Schools must remain safe, stable places where children can learn and heal.

Thank you for your leadership and attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely, [Name] [City, State]