

Judiciary House and Senate Committees, thank you for allowing me to share my firsthand observations of the recent incident involving federal immigration enforcement, local law enforcement, and protestors on March 11th on Dorset Street in S. Burlington.

On the day in question, the atmosphere began as orderly. Community members were present, and while there were differing viewpoints, the situation remained peaceful in its early stages.

As the morning progressed, several individuals arrived who were noticeably more confrontational. These agitators disrupted the previously calm environment by raising tensions and engaging in loud, aggressive behavior. Their actions appeared to escalate the situation significantly.

Once the warrant was executed, these individuals impeded federal law enforcement officers as they attempted to leave the area. This interference contributed to a shift from a peaceful gathering to a more volatile and unpredictable situation.

The escalation created an unsafe, chaotic environment. What had begun as a peaceful expression of views became overshadowed by disorder and obstruction. This not only affected those present but also complicated law enforcement's responsibilities and raised concerns about public safety and about eroding trust in our local law enforcement.

It is important to distinguish between peaceful protest—an essential and protected right—and actions that interfere with public safety or law enforcement operations. When individuals cross that line, it can undermine both community trust and the legitimacy of otherwise peaceful demonstrations.

I respectfully urge consideration of how to preserve the right to peaceful protest while also ensuring public safety and allowing law enforcement to carry out their duties without obstruction.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and for your attention to this matter.