

To: Sen. Nader Hashim and the Vermont Senate Judiciary
From: Dana Dwinell-Yardley, Montpelier citizen
Date: March 18, 2026
RE: Law enforcement at ICE raid on March 11

Dear members of the Senate Judiciary,

I was present at the ICE raid last Wednesday at 337 Dorset Street in South Burlington, and I wish to offer my eyewitness testimony as you review the actions of local and state law enforcement at that event. On that day, I was supporting the protesters; specifically, observing arrests so that we could continue to support folks if they got detained by law enforcement.

Physical violence: I witnessed multiple state troopers, Burlington police officers, and South Burlington police officers roughing protesters up and throwing protestors to the ground. There were often multiple law enforcement officials kneeling on a single protester who was lying prone. Multiple protestors said that they had been kicked or punched by officers. I have been in many protest situations where people were arrested, and this was the most violent response by law enforcement I have ever seen — a response far beyond what was called for, as every protestor I saw was unarmed. People were angry, shouting and cursing at ICE agents and local law enforcement, but anger is not the same as violence. I did not see protesters endangering police officers at any point. I did see protesters nonviolently put their bodies in the way of ICE vehicles, only to be violently removed by state and local law enforcement.

Collaboration with ICE: Local and state law enforcement may have been on scene to ostensibly “keep protesters safe,” as officials have stated in press conferences and news releases, but I also saw officers assisting ICE agents at multiple points. State troopers cleared a path down the front walk of 337 Dorset Street to allow ICE agents easy access to the door. Local police removed protesters who were blocking ICE vehicles. If the aim of local enforcement truly was to keep protesters safe, they could have done that without also assisting ICE agents in unlawfully removing these South Burlington neighbors from their home. The state’s fair and impartial policing policy was not followed last Wednesday, based on the actions of local and state officers that I witnessed.

No orders to disperse: At no point during the 3.5 hours I was on Dorset Street did I hear an order to disperse given by law enforcement or ICE agents. Word was going around that an ICE agent had told protesters to disperse, but I did not hear it myself. My understanding is that before police can arrest people, they must give a clear and lawful order to disperse (i.e. “if you don’t move out of the road, we will arrest you”), such that everyone can hear — and given the size of the crowd, that order would need to have been given over a bullhorn or speakers. Then, officers must give a reasonable amount of time for folks to comply with the order. Neither of these things happened last Wednesday.

Thank you for taking swift action to review the actions of local and state law enforcement in this matter. This is a vitally important moment to clarify our values as Vermonters; there will be more ICE raids in our state, and the way the law enforcement does or does not respond will determine whether our neighbors are safe or whether ICE agents are allowed to run amok and endanger lives. I hope that you and all of our state legislators are on the right side of history in siding with communities and neighbors.