



Statement for the Record

Public Field Hearing:

“Immigration Raids: Impacts and Aftermath on Mississippi Communities”

Thursday, November 7, 2019

Holmes Hall Auditorium, Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Mississippi

Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security, we thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record for the November 7 public field hearing on Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) workplace raids.

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is a national, nonpartisan, anti-poverty organization advancing federal, state, and local policy solutions that work for people with low incomes. We conduct research on the impact of immigration enforcement policies on children and families and advocate for policies that mitigate the harm to children impacted by enforcement actions. As experts on child development and immigration policy, we are gravely concerned with the long-term harm that the August Mississippi worksite raids have inflicted on hundreds of children, many of whom are U.S. citizens, as well as the broader community.

On August 7, 2019, ICE arrested 680 hardworking people in a series of worksite raids in small communities in central Mississippi. In a matter of hours, parents, friends, neighbors, and other integral community members were ambushed at their place of work, arrested, and separated from their loved ones. The raids—which targeted chicken-processing plants whose parent companies have been the subject of several federal investigations in the last decade—represent the largest single-state enforcement action in nearly 10 years.¹

The immediate impact to children was obvious: Terrified children got off school busses in the afternoon to empty houses. Babies and toddlers were stranded at child care without parents to pick them up. Teachers, child care providers, and volunteers scrambled to devise emergency plans for children with nowhere else to go. Churches, food banks, and immigrant-rights organizations were forced into crisis mode to meet families’ immediate needs and locate loved ones who were detained by ICE.

We urge the Committee to consider the critical testimonies of those who are living with the consequences of these massive workplace raids and act to ensure that these types of operations cease, and that the wellbeing of children be held paramount in all immigration enforcement actions. We also call on Congress to urge the Department of Homeland Security to release all those still detained so that they may pursue their options for immigration relief near their legal representatives and families. It is clear children, families, and Mississippi communities will be grappling with the aftermath for years to come.

Large-scale immigration enforcement actions are harmful to children’s health and wellbeing

A large and growing body of research details how large-scale worksite raids affect children. In the immediate

aftermath, there is intense fear, worry, and confusion as families' lives are thrown into chaos. This increased instability is an added stressor for children who just had their worst nightmare come true. Children may have trouble eating and sleeping or become anxious, withdrawn, clingy, or angry. Previous research shows that the longer children remain separated from their parents, the more their mental and physical health suffers.²

More than half of those arrested during these raids remain in detention, and several have been deported, including parents of U.S. citizen children.³ Children who are separated from a parent as a result of deportation face irrefutable harm, whether they remain in the U.S. without a parent or are forced to leave the only home they know to relocate abroad with a deported family member. It's important to note that the majority of the families impacted come from indigenous communities in Guatemala, which raises concerns about the extent to which families are able to access the assistance they need to prepare to have their children accompany them to Guatemala. Furthermore, research shows that there are significant challenges to ensuring that children are able to enroll in school or health care once in Guatemala.⁴

As the months stretch on, hardworking Mississippi families will likely tumble into poverty. Immigration enforcement often removes a primary breadwinner, slashing families' incomes by half or more.⁵ Parents left behind generally struggle to make ends meet and need ongoing support to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads—particularly those who are ensnared in ongoing deportation proceedings.⁶ Some teenage children are forced to drop out of school and begin working full-time or take on additional caregiving responsibilities for younger siblings in order to keep their families afloat. Already, it has been reported that families impacted by the Mississippi raids are facing housing and food challenges.⁷

Large-scale immigration enforcement actions put a strain on local providers and community members

Large-scale worksite raids also further put further pressure on already overwhelmed and under-resourced educational and social service providers. On the day of a raid, it is often teachers and child care providers comforting terrified children and making care arrangements for those whose parents are unable to pick them up.⁸ Educators also bear the added responsibility of addressing children's increased need for mental health resources and other supports over time. Similarly, community resources like food banks and emergency financial assistance may struggle to meet families' ongoing needs in the long term.

Many students impacted by the Mississippi raids have missed numerous school days, which creates consequences for the students, schools, as well as other children in the classroom. In our 2017 research on the impact of immigration enforcement on young children, we heard from early childhood providers and educators that children are picking up on the stress of their classmates, regardless of whether their parents are immigrants.⁹ Our research also found that immigration enforcement is creating significant strain on providers who are grappling to connect parents and students to information and resources while also trying to meet the demands of all the children they serve.

At a minimum, ICE must follow its own humanitarian guidelines for worksite enforcement actions

The government-imposed disaster on Mississippi communities earlier this year was worsened by the fact that ICE did not appear to fully implement its own guidelines to identify humanitarian concerns among immigrants who are arrested during worksite enforcement operations.¹⁰ These "humanitarian guidelines" were created in 2007 under the Bush administration specifically to mitigate the harm of worksite raids on children and communities.

The guidelines clearly state that during worksite enforcement actions involving 25 workers or more, ICE agents are

expected to identify and consider for release certain vulnerable populations in a timely manner. Individuals who should be considered for release include people who are sole caregivers of children; have serious medical conditions; are pregnant or nursing; or are caretakers of disabled or seriously ill relatives. ICE is also expected to coordinate with state or local social service agencies to help identify people who qualify for humanitarian release. At minimum, ICE is supposed to notify the heads of state social service agencies that a worksite action is imminent so that they be prepared to respond and ensure that children are safe. These precautions acknowledge that is irresponsible and reckless to carry out such massive operations without taking every possible step to ensure that children are not unnecessarily separated from their parents and social service agencies are not carrying the burden of response alone.

While immigration officials claim that parents were among the first to be released, many were not released until the day after the raid took place.¹¹ And it is clear that ICE did not take any precautions to ensure that children were not left alone without a caregiver. Reports from school leadership and child welfare officials in Mississippi suggest that they were completely blindsided by the August raids, which took place on the first day of school in many communities.¹² News reports showed children stranded overnight at a local gym, sleeping on the floor, and crying for their parents.¹³ Others were reportedly going door-to-door looking for their parents when they got off the school bus to an empty house. Several days after the raids, state Child Protective Services were still receiving reports that children had not been reunited with their parents.¹⁴

If the raid was indeed being planned for more than a year—as ICE officials claim—there is simply no excuse not to put these safeguards in place. CLASP demands an end to family separation in all its forms and condemns the administration’s relentless attacks on immigrants and people of color, which are imposing immeasurable trauma on a generation of children. At minimum, ICE must be held accountable to enforcing the safeguards it has in place.

Congress must take action to ensure ICE mitigates the harm of immigration enforcement on children

The significant impact of the Mississippi raids demonstrates the critical need for Congress to expand protections for children, families, and communities impacted by enforcement actions. We urge Congress to pass the Humane Enforcement and Legal Protections (HELP) for Separated Children Act (H.R. 3451), Coordinating Care for Children Act (S. 2256), and Help Separated Families Act (H.R. 3452). These bills are aimed at mitigating the harm to children impacted by interior immigration enforcement. The first two are focused on ICE practice, including allowing parents to make decisions about their children’s care after apprehension and before deportation, including protections to ensure that ICE does not interrogate children present during an enforcement action or force them to translate and requires sensitivity training for all agents. The latter bill is focused on ensuring that the child welfare system has protocols in place to ensure children are able to reunify with detained or deported parents.

We also encourage Congress to pass the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act (S. 2097/H.R. 1011), a bill which would codify, expand and strengthen existing policy that restricts ICE agents from carrying out enforcement actions in places deemed “sensitive,” such as schools, hospitals, and places of worship. The bill would expand the policy to include other locations such as courthouses, public libraries, and food banks; restrict ICE from carrying out enforcement actions within 1,000 feet of a sensitive location; and add more accountability measures.

Finally, it’s important to recognize that the significant increase in resources to ICE in recent years (including to Homeland Security Investigations, the agency which carried out the Mississippi raids) coupled with reduced

discretion to consider whether individuals detained are parents to children or have long-term community ties has had serious, often long-term consequences. Thus, we also urge Congress to cut funding to ICE for enforcement actions and ensure any funding includes specific guardrails to hold ICE accountable and minimize the harm to communities.

We thank you again for the opportunity to submit this written statement for the record. Should you have any questions regarding this statement, please do not hesitate to reach Wendy Cervantes, Director of Immigration and Immigrant Families, at wcervantes@clasp.org or 202-906-8059.

¹ Denham, Hannah. "What We Know about the 5 Companies Targeted in the ICE Raids in Mississippi." *The Washington Post*, August 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/08/08/what-we-know-about-five-companies-targeted-mississippi-ice-raids/

² Chaudry, Ajay, et al. *Facing Our Future: Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement*. Urban Institute, 2010, www.urban.org/research/publication/facing-our-future ; Capps, et al. *Paying the Price: The Impact of Immigration Raids on America's Children*. The Urban Institute, 2007, webarchive.urban.org/publications/411566.html.; "Digital Commons at Michigan State University College of Law." digitalcommons.law.msu.edu/facpubs/index.3.html.

³ Bethea, Charles. "After ICE Came to Morton, Mississippi." *The New Yorker*, The New Yorker, 31 Oct. 2019, www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/after-ice-came-to-morton-mississippi.

⁴ *Children in Harm's Way: Criminal Justice, Immigration Enforcement, and Child Welfare*. First Focus and The Sentencing Project, 2013, <https://firstfocus.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Children-in-Harms-Way.pdf>.

⁵ See for example: Chaudry, Ajay, et al. *Facing Our Future*, The Urban Institute, 2017, www.urban.org/research/publication/facing-our-future; Capps, Randy, et al. "Deferred Action for Unauthorized Immigrant Parents: Analysis of DAPA's Potential Effects on Families and Children." Migration Policy Institute, 2017, www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deferred-action-unauthorized-immigrant-parents-analysis-dapas-potential-effects-families ; Warren, et al. *Mass Deportations Would Impoverish US Families and Create Immense Social Costs*. Center for Migration Studies, 2017, cmsny.org/publications/mass-deportations-impoverish-us-families-create-immense-costs/.

⁶ Fields, Samantha. "What Are the Economic Impacts of ICE Raids?" *Marketplace*, 2019,

www.marketplace.org/2019/08/22/the-economic-consequences-of-ice-raids-are-far-reaching/

⁷ Bethea, Charles. "After ICE Came to Morton, Mississippi." *The New Yorker*, October 31, 2019,

www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/after-ice-came-to-morton-mississippi.

⁸ Lopez, William, et al. "Educators: The Unsung Heroes Supporting Immigrant Families in Wake of ICE Raids." *The Hill*, August 13 2019, <https://thehill.com/opinion/immigration/457146-educators-are-the-unsung-heroes-supporting-immigrant-families-in-the-wake>

⁹ Cervantes, et al. *Our Children's Fear: Immigration Policy's Effects on Young Children*. Center for Law and Social Policy, 2018, www.clasp.org/publications/report/brief/our-childrens-fear-immigration-policys-effects-young-children.

¹⁰ "Guidelines for Identifying Humanitarian Concerns Among Administrative Arrestees When Conducting Worksite Enforcement Operations." National Immigration Law Center, <https://www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ice-hum-guidelines.pdf>

¹¹ Campbell, Larrison. "In Record-Breaking Workplace Raid, Immigration Officials Claim Parents Released First." *Mississippi Today*, August 12, 2019, <https://mississippitoday.org/2019/08/08/in-record-breaking-workplace-raid-immigration-officials-claim-parents-released-first/>

¹² Pittman, Ashton, "As ICE Raided, Children Cried and Educators Scrambled," *Jackson Free Press*, 21 Aug. 2019, <https://www.jacksonfreepress.com/news/2019/aug/21/ice-raided-children-cried-and-educators-scrambled/>;

¹³ Helmore, Edward, "'They Cry for Their Parents': Mississippi ICE Raids Spur Pleas from Children," *The Guardian*, August 8 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/aug/08/mississippi-ice-raids-children-video>; Fowler, Sarah, "Where are Mom and Dad? School on Standby to Help Children in Aftermath of ICE Raids," *Clarion Ledger*, August 7 2019, <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2019/08/07/what-happens-children-people-detained-ms-ice-raids-immigration/1947642001/>.

¹⁴ Zhu, Alissa, "Mississippi Child Services: Some Children Still Not Reunited with Parents After ICE Raid," *Clarion Ledger*, August 12 2019, <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2019/08/12/mississippi-ice-raid-agency-says-some-children-still-without-parents-immigration/1987877001/>