

Testimony of Ana Michelle Ramirez Sanan

Thank you for the opportunity to share what ICE did to my family.

It's very hard to talk about, but I hope that telling our story will help stop ICE from hurting other families, who are being targeted just because of their race or where they live.

My name is Michelle Ramirez Sanan, and I am a high school student in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Next year, I will start college.

I have a younger brother who has autism, and we live with our mom, who takes care of us on her own. We are all very close and I am very protective of my brother.

Since President Trump took office, it's been hard to see so many people hurt by ICE.

Because my brother and I are U.S. citizens, and my mom has legal status, I felt like my family was safe.

That all changed last year on September 26, when my family was stopped by ICE in our neighborhood.

When I found out, I rushed to get to them as fast as I could.

When I arrived, the first thing I saw was our car with shattered windows. I was terrified that my mom and brother were already gone.

Then I saw them surrounded by ICE. My brother was crying next to my mom, who was being pushed against a fence and handcuffed. Most ICE officers were wearing masks. I could see they had guns.

I ran to try to get to my family, but I was blocked by a masked officer who grabbed my wrists.

My brother doesn't speak very much because of his disability. He doesn't know how to explain that he's an American citizen.

I was terrified that the officers were going to hurt him or take him away. I tried to protect him by yelling out: "My brother has autism!" But instead of helping him, the ICE officer kept blocking me and told me to "shut up."

I heard my mom cry out in pain as ICE officers slammed her on the ground and everything froze. I was so scared that she was hurt and that she wouldn't be ok.

The ICE officers finally let my brother come to me and I gave him a big hug. He was crying.

Then I saw that ICE was trying to take my mom into one of their cars. I couldn't understand why because she has legal status. I was terrified that we would never see her again.

I have asthma and started having trouble breathing. I didn't know what we would do without my mom. She is all we have.

Finally, the local police arrived and told ICE to check my mom's ID. They did and let her go.

A neighbor brought us water and I sat with my brother and tried to calm down while the paramedics helped my mom. We were then taken to the hospital in an ambulance.

The entire incident lasted about half an hour. But my family and I will never be the same.

Since that day, I have had a harder time focusing in school, taking care of myself, and managing my anxiety. I have had trouble sleeping and headaches.

I was so excited to enjoy my senior year before starting a new chapter in college.

But now I spend so much of my time wondering why this happened to us.

What if the police didn't get there in time to stop ICE from taking my mom?

What if ICE comes after us again?

Each time I leave my house, a part of me worries that I won't get home safe.

But I also see how much my mom and brother are struggling, so I try to be strong for them.

It is especially hard to see the way my younger brother has changed.

Because of his disability and age, he's had a hard time processing what happened, even with medical and professional support. He went from always wanting to go out to now just wanting to stay home. He spends more time alone. He has nightmares and cries a lot.

The first time he tried to go back in our car, he called me crying and had to get out.

I worry about what will happen when I am no longer living at home to support him and my mom.

To stand up for our rights, we filed a complaint against ICE with the help of Lawyers for Civil Rights in Boston.

I am speaking out today for families who can't speak out against ICE.

I am speaking out today to help people understand who ICE is hurting.

I am a citizen, and I am also a sister, a high-school student, and a daughter. I like drawing, dancing, and spending time with my family.

Kids and teenagers who look like me aren't safe in our own communities, even if we follow all the rules.

ICE may have let my family go, but they took so much from us. They made me feel like my family didn't matter and that no one would care what happened to us.

Thank you for the opportunity to help show that people care and that we are all human beings who matter.