

March 24 Senate testimony

My name is Anabel Romero. I am a U.S. citizen, born and raised in Idaho. I am a medical assistant, a wife, and a mother of four. October 19, 2025, was the day our lives changed for the bad.

I took my kids to the Catedral in Idaho, where families gather on Sundays to watch horse races and spend time together. I have gone to horse races since I can remember; it has always been a part of my life. That day was like any other fun day at the horse races for my family.

I went with my stepson and my three youngest children: Suehey (14), Neveah (8), and Alfredo Abel (6). We watched a couple of races. It was a rainy morning, so the children were in and out of my truck.

They got hungry, and I got them some food from one of the vendors. There were vendors of all sorts there. The two youngest children stayed in the truck with my oldest daughter, eating their food. Me and my stepson went to get some food for ourselves and walked to the back to the horse stalls to look at the horses.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, I saw a helicopter. I thought nothing of it. Since I work in the medical field, I thought it was probably Life Flight, helping someone in need.

But then I saw people running and screaming, terrified.

Then, men in military style gear stormed in, with weapons at the ready.

Terrified, the first thing I did was call my daughter and tell her not to get out of the truck and to take care of her brother and sister. I was terrified for their safety.

After that, I ran and hid in one of the horse stalls. It was violent chaos.

Armed men barged in. Immediately, they started grabbing me without letting me know what was going on, who they were, or why they were there.

They did not identify themselves. I was asking, demanding answers. They started grabbing me. I told them not to touch me, and they wouldn't give me answers. They kept on grabbing me.

One of them threatened to blow my head off.

I kept demanding answers. Then, five of them threw me to the ground and started kicking me and punching me.

My head was inside the shavings, I couldn't breathe, and they zip-tied me in the back.

After that, they brought me up, and I told them I needed to get to my children. One of them actually laughed and said they were taking better care of them than I was.

All I wanted was to get to my children. I was with dozens of other people, zip tied and herded like cattle to the center of the arena.

When my kids and I finally spotted each other, they ran to me, and they started crying and telling me everything that happened.

My oldest daughter was thrown out of our truck. She got bruises all down her side, and they wouldn't let her take care of her younger siblings.

My two youngest were taken from the truck at gunpoint. They are 6 and 8 years old. They were alone and terrified. My 14 year old daughter had to care for all of them.

When my children were with me, I couldn't comfort them. They were crying, and I was still zip-tied in the back, with no answers for why I was being detained or why these hundreds of officers were there.

My children had to use the restroom. I wasn't able to take them because they wouldn't remove my zip ties. They didn't even provide restrooms, so people were forced to go out in the open. The degradations kept mounting.

Eventually, they brought porta-potties. And after my 14 year old daughter was finally able to use the restroom, she was also zip-tied.

She started having a panic attack. I told the officers she was underage—she was 14—and it wasn't right. I feared she might hurt herself if she fainted. I asked them to zip-tie her in the front. They did, but she was still having a panic attack. I repeated that she was underage, but they didn't care.

We waited like that, zip tied and scared, for three hours.

When my daughter told an officer her zip ties were too tight, he laughed.

Eventually, we realized what was happening: They herded us like cattle and tied us up so that ICE could check everyone's immigration status.

Hundreds of people at a family event. Grandparents and infants. And all they knew was that most of us were Hispanic or Latino. For them, that was enough to treat us all like criminals and degrade us.

While we waited, my children fed water to others because everyone was zip tied.

My children and I are U.S. citizens, born and raised in Idaho. Like hundreds of other Americans that day, we were put through immigration processing in zip ties.

They almost took my kids from me because they have different last names. The raid was five months ago, but we're still suffering. My kids are struggling mentally, struggling to make sense of what happened. I'm temporarily out of work because I can't focus.

That day completely changed our lives.

We were degraded.

Our rights were violated.

Our sense of safety and security was demolished.

My kids and I can't trust law enforcement anymore.

All of that violence was preplanned — to target a Sunday afternoon family outing.

And not a word of apology or regret after.

We deserve better from our government.

We demand better from our government.