

Testimony of Patricia Fox

Before the Subcommittee on Oversight
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives

Hearing on: *The Human Toll of Sanctuary Policies: Stories from Victims and Families*

“Now that I’ve been holding my arms open to what life has to offer me I couldn’t be happier.”

That was the last text from my daughter roughly 2 hours before Valeria Bermudez Marcano would run a stop sign, cross three lanes without looking and collide with Carissa, slamming her headfirst into the concrete barrier at Parker and 225.

The driver fled the scene with her boyfriend and aunt, never calling 911 and never checking to see if my daughter was alive or dead.

My daughter was left fighting for her life.

My daughter had just moved back to Colorado 6 weeks prior with a fire in her to follow her ambitions, build a life and perhaps one day, have a family of her own. Driven, she wasted no time in enrolling into aesthetician school, rising quickly to the top of her class, landing a job with a high-end salon and reconnecting with friends. She’d smile with confidence as she talked about her dreams of creating a skincare line based on beauty secrets around the world. She was very specific that her goal was to make quality skincare affordable for everyone, because “everyone deserved to feel beautiful.” I was so proud of the young woman Carissa was blossoming into right before my eyes.

She would have done it too because when my daughter put her mind to something, she achieved it.

Now? She’s minimally conscious, nonverbal, is wheelchair bound and eats through a feeding tube. She has very little cognitive control over her body. She spends her days 100% dependent on me, my mom and her home nurses for the most basic human functions. She communicates discomfort through grunts and moans and at night, she often “calls out” to me. I think she’s afraid of the dark or of being alone or both, I don’t know for sure, because she can’t tell me. I just know that the pulse ox that monitors her vitals while she sleeps says her heartrate is high when I walk in and when I touch her arm and sing to her in those wee hours, it settles back down and she eventually goes back to sleep.

And to think, we're the lucky ones. My little girl survived. I still get to kiss her, hold her hand when she lifts it for me, watch her close her eyes as I brush her hair. Many Angel Families don't get that. That blessing is not lost on me. For us, there is hope, regardless of what the doctors say, because God is big and happens to be in the business of miracles.

The Reality That Followed

My daughter's care is now my full-time responsibility.

Her medical bills are already in the seven figures and continue to rise. The individual responsible, an uninsured driver, has contributed nothing.

Instead, the burden of her care falls entirely on our family.

Each day is a fight.

I fight insurance denials for therapies prescribed by her doctors.

I fight for equipment that allows her to sit safely, breathe properly, and avoid further injury.

I fight for services that are not optional, they are necessary for her survival and quality of life.

Even when she qualifies, access is not guaranteed.

Many of the systems my daughter depends on, home health services, non-emergency medical transport, adult day programs and the like, are under increasing scrutiny due to documented fraud and abuse. While oversight is necessary, the consequence is that families like mine face additional barriers to accessing legitimate care.

So while I care for a daughter who cannot advocate for herself, I am also navigating systems that are often difficult to access and sustain.

The Policy Environment That Allowed This

What happened to my daughter did not "just happen".

When laws are not enforced, it creates an environment where lawfulness is simply unnecessary. That environment extends beyond immigration status, it affects everyday decisions, including whether individuals obtain driver's licenses, carry insurance, and follow basic public safety laws.

The individual who struck Carissa was driving without a license and without insurance. After causing the collision, she fled the scene without calling 911 or offering any kind of assistance.

That is not an isolated issue. It is part of a broader pattern that emerges when accountability is grossly neglected.

“The Worst of the Worst”

We often hear that enforcement should focus only on “the worst of the worst.”

My daughter was not harmed by someone previously labeled as “the worst of the worst.”

She was harmed by someone who should not have been in a position to cause that harm in the first place.

I reject the idea that families like mine must wait for tragedy before action is taken.

There should not have to be a Carissa.

Or a Laken Riley.

Or a Sheridan Gorman.

Or a Katie Abraham.

Or the thousands of victims that have suffered injuries and death.

Public policy should not require a threshold of victims before it is taken seriously. Our children are not “acceptable collateral damage”.

The “Lower Crime Rate” Argument

We are often told that individuals in the country illegally commit crimes at lower rates than American citizens. They say “studies show”. But when you start digging into those studies, they don’t hold up under scrutiny.

So let’s talk about statistics we know:

Unlicensed drivers are estimated to have 5 times higher risk of being involved in a fatal crash. They are often involved in reckless behaviors, such as speeding and impaired driving, leading to higher rates of serious injury and fatalities.

Research indicates that crashes involving unlicensed drivers are generally more severe than those with licensed drivers, often resulting in higher fatality rates.

Colorado has one of the highest rates of uninsured drivers in the U.S., with estimates between 17.5% and 19.7% as of 2024.

While roughly 16% of all Colorado drivers are uninsured, about 25% of the state's uninsured motorists are estimated to be unlicensed, illegal aliens.

Despite the licensing program, a substantial portion of uninsured vehicles in Colorado (roughly 24–25%) are driven by undocumented individuals who do not have a license, and therefore, lack insurance.

Here's another factual statistic:

Entering the United States illegally is considered a criminal offense under federal law, specifically under 8 U.S.C. § 1325.

100% of illegal aliens are criminals.

Preventable harm is being ignored and allowed to occur.

This cannot continue.

We the people want secure borders and deportations. How do I know? Our 45th President ran on a promise to do both and that man is now our 47th President.

The Response We Encounter

Since speaking publicly, I have heard the same responses repeatedly:

"It could have just as easily been an American citizen."

But it wasn't.

Facts must matter more than hypotheticals.

I have also been told, "It just sounds like a tragic accident."

It was not.

It was not an accident that the individual entered the United States illegally in 2023.

It was not an accident that she drove without a license.

It was not an accident that she drove without insurance.

And it was certainly not an accident that she fled the scene without rendering aid.

I have also been told that sharing my daughter's story is "bigoted."

It is not bigotry to want your child to come home safe.

The Cost of Speaking Out

Each Angel Family that comes forward is risking more pain and trauma.

We receive death threats.

We've lost friends.

We have to relive our trauma over and over again, every time we tell our stories. But who is going to tell our stories if we don't? The mainstream media? Not likely.

You'll never hear Carissa's story from Colorado democrat politicians like John Hickenlooper, Jason Crow, Brittany Petersen, Jared Polis or Joe Neguse.

So here we are, telling our stories again and again until not one more daughter, son, loved one is lost to these fully preventable tragedies.

Why I Am Here

I do not want my daughter's life reduced to a story.

I want it to matter.

I want it to lead to action.

Our family received a small measure of justice when we were informed that Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) in Denver deported the individual responsible quietly, expeditiously, and safely back to Venezuela.

But that is not enough.

The only thing that comes close to making this "ok" is knowing that what happened to my daughter will not happen to another family.

Closing

Policies have consequences.

Those consequences are not abstract.

They are carried by families like mine for the rest of our lives.

I ask this Committee to take those consequences seriously, and to act accordingly.

Thank you.