

Written Testimony of Patricia Fox

U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary

Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement

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My name is Patricia Fox, and I am the mother of Carissa Aspnes. I have testified before Congress before about what happened to my daughter. This time, I want to focus primarily on something that receives far less attention in conversations about immigration crime: what happens when the victim does not die.

On March 28, 2025, my 22-year-old daughter Carissa was catastrophically injured while riding as a passenger on a motorcycle in Aurora, Colorado. According to Aurora Police, a vehicle driven by Valeria Bermudez Marcano crossed multiple lanes of traffic onto South Parker Road and pulled into the path of the motorcycle. After the collision, Valeria fled the scene, abandoned her vehicle and later turned herself in. Carissa was rushed into emergency surgery with devastating injuries to her brain.[1] Before that night, Carissa was an independent young woman preparing for a career as an aesthetician. She loved skincare, gaming, her friends and her family. She had plans and ambitions and all of the ordinary expectations a 22-year-old should be entitled to have about her future.

Today, Carissa is profoundly disabled by a catastrophic traumatic brain injury. She is nonverbal and requires constant care. She receives nutrition through a feeding tube, uses a wheelchair and cannot independently perform the basic activities of daily living.[1] She cannot get herself out of bed, walk to the bathroom, take a shower, prepare a meal, drive somewhere or simply tell me in words when something hurts. The freedoms most of us never think about disappeared in seconds.

I am profoundly grateful that my daughter survived. But survival was not the end of Carissa's victimization. In many ways, it was the beginning of a new chapter of it.

The Continuing Cost of Survival

The collision lasted seconds. Its consequences govern nearly every minute of our lives.

My days are structured around Carissa's care. I transfer her using a mechanical lift. I prepare and administer her tube feedings and medications. I bathe and reposition her, perform personal care, take her to appointments and therapies, and monitor her for changes she cannot explain to me herself. I have learned to recognize discomfort through changes in her facial expressions, body movements and vital signs. I have had to learn a new language because my daughter lost hers.

Carissa's physician has ordered that she requires a two-person assist for all cares and transfers. Yet Colorado Medicaid denied our request for private-duty nursing. Medicaid has also denied the wheelchair she needs, and we have encountered denials and reductions involving essential therapies. At the same time, compensation for the caregiving I provide has been reduced.

The significance of the private-duty-nursing denial is difficult to appreciate from an authorization form. A physician can write "two-person assist for all cares and transfers" on an order, but an order does not put a second person in my home. If Medicaid determines that it will not provide the nursing assistance necessary to make that second person available, the need does not disappear. The responsibility simply shifts to the family.

This is why I believe Colorado has failed Carissa twice. The first failure involved immigration and sanctuary policies that helped create the circumstances that placed the person who injured her in Colorado. The second failure came after Carissa survived, when the same state began reducing or denying resources affecting the quality and safety of the care she now depends upon.

Finding Out Who Hit My Daughter

Immediately after the collision, the initial police investigator told our family that Valeria was a citizen. For months, I had no reason to believe otherwise.

Then, in September 2025, ICE and Valeria's immigration status began surfacing in connection with the criminal proceedings. I was confused because this contradicted what I had explicitly been told. I began asking questions, but I could not get a definitive explanation. I received vague answers that did not reconcile what I was hearing with the information our family had originally received.

That was when I reached out to Libs of TikTok through X. Through their contacts, I finally received confirmation that Valeria was in the United States illegally. I subsequently learned that she had entered the United States illegally in 2023 during the Biden administration. It was also confirmed to me that she had come to Colorado because of its sanctuary policies.

That experience is one reason I view some of our current political rhetoric very differently than I once might have. Elon Musk is heavily vilified in American public life, but if he had not purchased X, I do not know that I ever would have made the connection that finally helped my family get answers. I do not expect every member of this Committee to like Elon Musk, Libs of TikTok or President Donald Trump. But I cannot ignore the fact that people and institutions I am routinely told should be viewed as villains became the ones who helped my family obtain answers and, ultimately, the only meaningful form of justice we received.

Why Her Immigration Status Matters

There are people who become offended when I describe the person who hit Carissa as an illegal alien. I have sometimes been told, explicitly or implicitly, that her immigration status is irrelevant to what happened to my daughter.

At the last congressional hearing where I testified, Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett argued, in substance, that if an American citizen had done this, the pain would be there all the same.[2] I respectfully disagree with the conclusion that follows from that comparison.

Of course an American citizen could have caused the same collision. An American citizen could drive without a license, drive without insurance, violate traffic laws, flee an accident and catastrophically injure another person. Carissa's brain injury would be every bit as devastating, and I would grieve the life she lost every bit as deeply.

But the story would not be the same.

Valeria's immigration status matters because she had no lawful right to be in the United States in the first place. Had our immigration laws been enforced in a way that prevented her unlawful entry or resulted in her removal before March 28, 2025, she could not have injured Carissa on a Colorado road.

Her lack of a driver's license is also relevant. In Colorado, illegal aliens have been able to obtain a standard Colorado driver's license for more than a decade under the Colorado Road and Community Safety Act. The Colorado DMV expressly states that the program applies to illegal aliens.[3] Valeria therefore was not unlicensed simply because her immigration status made obtaining a Colorado driver's license impossible. Colorado gave her a lawful avenue to obtain driving privileges, subject to the same testing and safety requirements that apply to those credentials, and she nevertheless drove without a license.

I do not claim that her immigration status proves why she was uninsured, why she violated a particular traffic law, or why she fled the scene. But I also will not pretend that her immigration status was irrelevant to the larger chain of events when there is a clear pattern of neglecting our laws.

Her immigration status ultimately mattered to what happened after the collision. It was why federal immigration enforcement had authority to remove her from the United States. It was why the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement Office was relevant to our family. And it was why ICE was ultimately able to provide a form of accountability that Colorado's criminal process did not.

Those facts are part of the story.

Removing them does not make the story more compassionate. It makes the story less complete.

There is a profound difference between saying that an immigrant's status makes her less human and saying that her immigration status is materially relevant to understanding how she came to be here, what laws applied to her, what enforcement opportunities existed, and what happened after she injured an American citizen.

I am saying the latter.

The truth requires the whole story.

If an American citizen had done exactly what Valeria did, my grief over Carissa's injuries would indeed be every bit as profound. But I would not also be asking why someone who had no lawful right to be in this country was here to hit her in the first place.

I would not have spent months trying to determine an immigration status after our family had initially been told she was a citizen. I would not have needed the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement Office. ICE would not have ultimately removed that American citizen from the country. And I would not be sitting before an immigration subcommittee examining how state and local restrictions on cooperation with federal immigration authorities affect public safety.

So no, the story is not the same.

The physical injuries might have been identical. The grief might have been just as devastating. But there is an additional sense of betrayal when a family discovers that the person who destroyed their child's future was in the country unlawfully while elected officials were advancing policies designed to restrict immigration enforcement and cooperation with the federal government.

That is not hatred. It is not prejudice. It is a relevant fact about how Carissa became a victim, and asking me to omit it asks me to tell Congress only half of her story.

Half the story is not the truth.

What Colorado's Justice System Recognized

Meanwhile, the criminal case continued. One continuance became another until six became seven. As charges were reduced through plea negotiations, I came to believe that the criminal process would never produce consequences remotely proportional to the permanent damage done to Carissa.

The restitution component of the case crystallized that feeling for me. Valeria was ultimately ordered to pay \$15,000 in restitution.^[1] That restitution was for the motorcycle. Not one dollar of restitution was ordered to help Carissa.

What made this even more difficult was discovering through my interactions with the people involved in the case that the prosecutor, public defender and victim advocate did not understand the extent of Carissa's condition. They did not know that the young woman at the center of the case was living with profound, catastrophic disabilities.

I understand that restitution law has legal limitations and that not every human loss can be assigned a recoverable dollar value in a criminal case. My point is about what this experience felt like from the victim's side of the

system. The motorcycle had a value the process recognized: \$15,000. The young woman whose independence had been destroyed seemed almost invisible.

The motorcycle can be replaced. Carissa's life cannot.

By the seventh court appearance, I no longer believed the state criminal process would provide meaningful accountability. That was when I submitted Carissa's case to the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement Office, commonly known as VOICE. President Trump had reinstated the program after returning to office. VOICE provided our family with information and assistance at a time when we had struggled to obtain answers elsewhere.[1] In early March 2026, we learned that ICE had removed Valeria to Venezuela. CBS Colorado subsequently reported that ICE arrested her after her guilty plea and removed her from the United States on March 2, 2026. [1] Her deportation was the natural consequence of Valeria's illegal presence in the United States, not for what she did to Carissa. But for our family, it was the closest thing to meaningful justice we received.

It did not give Carissa back her voice, her independence or the career she was preparing to begin. It did not undo her brain injury or return our family to the life we had before March 28. But it meant that the person who had already demonstrated a willingness to drive unlawfully, catastrophically injure another person and flee the scene would no longer have the opportunity to create another Angel Family.

The Danger Is Not Limited to the "Worst of the Worst"

Much of the immigration debate focuses on identifying and removing the "worst of the worst" - people who have committed murder, rape, trafficking and other serious violent crimes. Those individuals unquestionably present a public-safety threat. But my daughter's case illustrates why the discussion cannot end there.

Valeria was not the "worst of the worst." By some standards used in our immigration debate, she might even have been regarded as one of "the good ones." She did not set out on March 28, 2025 intending to catastrophically injure my daughter. To my knowledge, she did not wake up that morning planning to commit a violent crime. Carissa's injuries were not the result of an intentional assault.

That does not make what happened to Carissa any less devastating.

The events leading to that night involved violations that are easy to minimize when considered individually. Valeria entered the United States illegally. She was driving without a valid driver's license. She was driving without insurance. She had accumulated previous traffic violations. Everything leading up to the collision might have been dismissed as mere traffic offenses or "just misdemeanors". Only at the point of collision and after, when she fled the scene, did the outcome become horrific.

This is why laws matter before someone becomes a victim. A driver's-license requirement is a guardrail. Insurance requirements are guardrails. Traffic laws are guardrails. Immigration laws are guardrails. Cooperation between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities is another guardrail. We should not have to wait until someone is killed or permanently disabled before those guardrails suddenly become important.

I cannot tell this Committee what Valeria believed about American law or what consequences she expected for violating it. I cannot see inside her mind, and I will not pretend that I can. I can tell you what I personally witnessed.

Before her seventh court appearance, Carissa and I passed Valeria in the courthouse hallway. At the time, I did not recognize her. She was standing with her boyfriend, casually talking and laughing. It struck me afterward how ordinary the moment had seemed. My daughter was sitting nearby profoundly disabled, while the person responsible for putting her in that condition appeared to be going through another ordinary day.

That changed inside the courtroom. When Valeria finally stood before the judge and pleaded guilty to the remaining felony charge, she cried.

I later learned about another moment when ICE took her into custody. When the ICE officer opened the vehicle door, Valeria initially hesitated and appeared confused. She did not seem to understand what was happening. When the officer instructed her to get out and began placing her in handcuffs, she cried again.

I cannot testify to what she was thinking in either moment. But those experiences reinforced something very basic for me: laws have meaning because violating them can carry immeasurable consequences. Accountability should not begin after someone destroys a life.

Each ignored law increased the likelihood that something devastating could happen. It is precisely why laws exist - to reduce risk before the catastrophic outcome happens to a real family.

The purpose of a guardrail is not to punish the person who hits it. It is to prevent that person from going over the cliff. Carissa is what happens when enough guardrails fail.

If immigration enforcement is justified only after someone becomes one of the "worst of the worst," what happens to the American citizen who has to become that person's first catastrophic victim? Public safety cannot operate exclusively in hindsight.

Valeria's deportation mattered deeply to my family. I am grateful for it. But I would trade that justice in an instant for a world in which Carissa had never needed justice at all.

What Sanctuary Policy Means in Practice

The stated purpose of this hearing is to examine how state and local policies that prohibit cooperation with federal immigration authorities hurt public safety. Colorado provides concrete examples of those restrictions.

In 2019, Colorado enacted HB19-1124. Among other provisions, the law prohibits a law-enforcement officer from arresting or detaining a person solely on the basis of a civil immigration detainer and prohibits probation personnel from providing an individual's personal information to federal immigration authorities, while preserving cooperation involving judicial warrants and criminal investigations.[4] Colorado expanded these restrictions in 2025 through SB25-276. The enacted law prohibits jail custodians from delaying a defendant's release for the purpose of an immigration-enforcement operation; extends the civil-immigration-detainer prohibition to additional peace officers; extends restrictions on sharing personal information with federal immigration authorities to pretrial personnel; and applies limitations on disclosure of nonpublic personal identifying information for federal immigration enforcement to political subdivisions and their employees.[5] The law expressly preserves cooperation with federal law enforcement in criminal investigations authorized by judicial process.[5] That distinction is important: Colorado has not prohibited every form of cooperation with federal authorities. But it has made a deliberate policy choice to restrict state and local participation in civil immigration enforcement and the information and custody mechanisms federal immigration authorities use.

My daughter's case demonstrates why cooperation itself matters.

After Valeria entered Colorado's criminal justice system, my family spent months unable even to obtain a clear answer about her immigration status. When federal immigration enforcement ultimately became involved, VOICE helped us obtain answers and ICE removed her from the country.

My family has therefore experienced both sides of this debate. We have lived the consequences of failed immigration policy, and we have experienced what happened when federal immigration enforcement was finally able to do its job.

Why would a state make it harder for its own institutions to communicate and cooperate with the federal officers charged with determining whether someone is lawfully present and removable? When government deliberately weakens a guardrail, it should at least be honest about who is being asked to bear the additional risk.

Meeting the People Behind ICE

I later had the opportunity to visit the ICE field office in Colorado and personally thank the people doing this work. What I encountered was profoundly different from the picture of ICE I so often hear presented publicly.

I met the officer involved in Valeria's removal. I learned about his work alongside the Drug Enforcement Administration and about the fentanyl he has personally helped remove from Colorado's streets. I met another young officer who told me that he and his partner were working their seventh consecutive day. He did not tell me that seeking sympathy. He spoke with determination because he wanted me to understand that they were doing everything within their power to make Colorado safer.

Several people told us that our visit was the first time anyone had personally come to thank them for what they do. That saddened me, but it also said something important about their dedication. They had continued doing their jobs without gratitude and in the midst of extraordinary public criticism.

Immigration enforcement has a strange characteristic: some of its greatest successes can never be measured. There is no victim-impact statement from a person who was never harmed because someone dangerous was removed first. There aren't statistics for the number of fentanyl overdoses that didn't happen. There is no grieving family to interview when the crime never occurred. Prevention leaves no victim behind to tell the story.

The Second Failure: Care for the Life Carissa Has Left

After Carissa survived the first failure, our family encountered another government system with enormous power over her future: Medicaid.

Colorado faced significant budget pressures going into Fiscal Year 2026-27, and I understand that resources are finite. Families like mine understand scarcity extraordinarily well. But budgets are more than arithmetic. They are also expressions of priorities.

In April 2026, Colorado Joint Budget Committee staff prepared a memorandum specifically detailing budget actions affecting Home- and Community-Based Services waivers for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. JBC staff calculated \$214,975,350 in FY2026-27 reductions, including \$107,918,609 in Colorado General Fund reductions and approximately \$106.6 million in federal funds.[6] Those reductions were not confined to administrative overhead. Approximately \$91.1 million involved eligibility and benefit changes. That included \$25.3 million associated with limiting Community Connector services; \$22.7 million associated with new soft caps on personal care, homemaker and health-maintenance activities; \$15.3 million from changes affecting youth transitioning into the adult Developmental Disabilities waiver; \$12.6 million from new cost-sharing requirements; \$7.4 million from a Community Connector age restriction; and \$6.6 million from reducing DD-waiver waitlist enrollments.[6] The personal-care reduction is particularly illustrative of what budget language means in an actual home. JBC describes personal care as assistance with bathing, dressing, eating, mobility and hygiene. Homemaker services include meal preparation, cleaning, laundry and shopping. Health-maintenance activities can include medication administration, catheter care and respiratory assistance. Before the new limits, JBC staff stated that these services were authorized according to assessed need rather than being subject to these caps.[6] Colorado also reduced the maximum homemaker hours payable to a legally responsible family caregiver from ten hours per week to five. A separate caregiver-hours policy begins at a maximum of 84 hours per week per member in July 2026, falls to 70 hours in January 2027, and ultimately reaches 56 hours in July 2027.[6] The state also reduced funding for new enrollments from the Developmental Disabilities waiver waitlist so that only one person is enrolled for every two people who leave the waiver - a 50 percent reduction in vacancy enrollments. According to JBC staff, the average adult on that waitlist already waits approximately seven years.[6] Provider reimbursement was reduced as well. JBC identified approximately \$112.1 million in provider-rate reductions, including \$34.4 million in Community Connector rate reductions, \$28.8 million from an across-the-board 2 percent reduction affecting IDD-waiver provider rates, \$26.6 million

associated with changes to home-health and nursing rates, and \$22.4 million from reversing the previous year's 1.6 percent provider-rate increase.[6] The home-health and nursing changes are particularly relevant to families like mine. JBC states that the changes affect the rate structure for private-duty nursing and home health as well as certified nursing assistants and physical, occupational and speech-language therapy services. JBC estimated \$26.6 million in reduced FY2026-27 expenditures, including approximately \$13.7 million in Colorado General Fund dollars, with the reduction growing to \$58.4 million in the following year.[6] Not every one of these reductions applies directly to Carissa, and I do not claim that they do. I include them because they establish the larger environment in which Colorado families caring for profoundly disabled people are being told that difficult reductions are necessary.

That makes the state's other healthcare spending decisions relevant.

What Colorado Continues to Spend on Healthcare Regardless of Immigration Status

Colorado enacted HB22-1289, known as Cover All Coloradans, to extend public healthcare coverage to certain children and pregnant people who meet the program's other eligibility requirements but lack qualifying immigration status, including people who are in the United States illegally and eligible children. The original fiscal assumptions significantly underestimated subsequent enrollment and expenditures.

The most current figures available to me before this testimony come from Colorado's own 2026 budget documents. JBC's March 2026 figure-setting document used HCPF's February forecast and projected 20,470 children in the program during FY2025-26, with children's benefits costing \$79,582,265. For FY2026-27, HCPF projected enrollment of 25,000 children and spending of \$96,265,223.[7] Every dollar of those children's benefit expenditures was projected from Colorado's General Fund; JBC expressly identifies no federal match for that component.[7] Pregnancy coverage adds another substantial category. The February forecast projected FY2026-27 spending of approximately \$84.3 million for Medicaid pregnancy coverage and \$4.7 million for CHP+ pregnancy coverage within Cover All Coloradans. Those expenditures are funded through a combination of Colorado General Fund and federal funds.[8] Taken together, the February forecast projected 33,906 Cover All Coloradans enrollees in FY2026-27 and approximately \$185.3 million in total expenditures, consisting of approximately \$127.4 million in Colorado General Fund dollars and \$57.9 million in federal funds.[8] That distinction is important. Not all \$185.3 million is Colorado state taxpayer spending. Approximately \$127.4 million is the General Fund component; approximately \$57.9 million is federal funding.

The state itself has now recognized the program's growth. In 2026, Colorado enacted HB26-1411 to limit certain Cover All Coloradans benefits. Effective July 1, 2026, the law establishes a \$1,100 annual dental cap. Beginning January 1, 2027, it makes additional benefit changes, and it establishes mechanisms related to limiting enrollment. The enacted legislation describes the affected population as low-income people who are not otherwise eligible for medical assistance because of their immigration status.[9] The breadth of this program matters because Cover All Coloradans is not merely an emergency-room program. Colorado created comprehensive health coverage for eligible children modeled on Medicaid and CHP+ benefits.

Colorado also separately finances a Reproductive Health program. JBC's March 2026 figures identify \$2,614,490 annually, entirely from Colorado's General Fund.[7] There are other categories, including Emergency Medicaid, where federal law permits reimbursement for qualifying emergency medical conditions for people who cannot receive ordinary Medicaid because of immigration status, including people unlawfully present in the United States. Those programs involve both state and federal dollars.

What also matters is that the state has made affirmative choices to devote substantial state resources to these programs at the same time it is reducing expenditures affecting disability services.

Abortion and Gender-Affirming Care

The scope of the healthcare Colorado has chosen to finance also deserves an accurate accounting.

Beginning January 1, 2026, Colorado expanded publicly financed abortion coverage. Colorado's budget documents project \$5,857,600 in FY2026-27 abortion-care expenditures, entirely from the Colorado General Fund.[10] HCPF has stated that the expanded abortion benefit applies to Health First Colorado, including Cover All Coloradans, as well as Emergency Medicaid/Reproductive Health Care Program members and CHP+. This expansion means eligible people enrolled through programs that include undocumented beneficiaries are not categorically excluded from government-funded abortion care.

Colorado Medicaid also reimburses gender-affirming healthcare. Legislative proposals in 2025 generated estimates of the amount spent on those services, but the nonpartisan fiscal analysis provides a more defensible statewide HCPF figure of approximately \$3.2 million annually. Those expenditures involve multiple funding sources. The available fiscal documents do not establish how much of that expenditure is attributable to undocumented beneficiaries; however, illegal aliens are not categorically excluded from eligibility for these services.

The point is not that every dollar Colorado spends on someone here illegally could simply be transferred into Carissa's Medicaid authorization. That is not how government budgeting works. Nor do I claim that the \$107.9 million in General Fund reductions affecting IDD waivers was literally transferred into Cover All Coloradans.

The comparison is about priorities.

In the same FY2026-27 budget environment, JBC documented approximately \$107.9 million in Colorado General Fund reductions affecting IDD HCBS waivers, while HCPF's February forecast projected approximately \$127.4 million in Colorado General Fund expenditures for Cover All Coloradans, including approximately \$96.3 million in General Fund spending for children's coverage alone.[6][8] Those numbers do not prove that one program caused the reductions in another. They do establish what Colorado chose to reduce and what Colorado chose to continue funding.

For a mother whose profoundly disabled daughter has been denied private-duty nursing, an appropriate wheelchair and essential therapies while her caregiving compensation is being reduced, that distinction matters.

Colorado can explain why each denial complies with a regulation. It can explain why reimbursement methodologies had to change. It can explain why provider rates had to be reduced. It can explain why the budget required difficult decisions.

But explanations do not put a second caregiver in my home. They do not put Carissa in the wheelchair she needs. They do not provide the therapy she lost.

At some point, families like mine are entitled to ask why profoundly disabled Coloradans were among the places the state decided it could save money while maintaining substantial state-funded healthcare expansions based specifically on the absence of qualifying immigration status.

One Victim Became an Entire Family of Victims

There is another cost of Carissa's injury that appears in no state budget.

Carissa's condition did not change only her life and mine. It changed the lives of her siblings.

Her younger sister Naomi is 19. Young adults her age should be imagining careers, relationships, travel, families and all of the possibilities ahead of them. Naomi has to think about something most of her peers do not: what happens to Carissa when I am no longer physically capable of caring for her.

Naomi has expressed fear about the future when she and her older brother Connor, who is 26, will have to pick up the mantle. She loves Carissa and has made clear that she would never simply abandon her sister to an institution. But love does not make the weight of that responsibility disappear.

At 19, Naomi already knows that part of her future has been decided for her. Choices that other young adults can make freely may someday have to be evaluated against whether they are compatible with caring for a profoundly disabled sister. Connor carries that future as well.

They did not choose this. Carissa did not choose this. I did not choose this.

One collision created an entire family of victims.

This is one of the reasons I believe our understanding of immigration crime is incomplete when we count only deaths. A person can survive and lose almost everything. An entire family can survive with that person and live with the consequences for decades.

How does a government statistic measure the career Carissa will never have? How does it calculate the value of speech or independence? Where is the line item for every transfer, every feeding, every shower, every medical appointment and every night her sister spends worrying about what happens when I am gone?

None of that appears in a statistic that says Carissa "survived."

The Human Cost of Policy

I have heard sanctuary policies discussed primarily as a jurisdictional disagreement between federal and state governments or as a partisan argument about immigration enforcement. That framing has a tendency to make victims disappear.

Valeria is responsible for the decisions she made on March 28, 2025. Sanctuary policy did not force her to drive that night, and it did not force her to leave the scene. I do not absolve an individual of personal responsibility by criticizing government policy.

But government is responsible for its decisions too.

Policies determine how immigration law is enforced, when jurisdictions cooperate with federal authorities, what information is shared, and under what circumstances immigration authorities can act. Those choices carry consequences even when the policymakers who make them never meet the people who ultimately bear those consequences.

This should not be a partisan proposition.

The death of an American citizen should matter to Republicans and Democrats. The catastrophic and permanent injury of an American citizen should matter to Republicans and Democrats. Protecting Americans should not become more or less important depending upon which party controls the presidency.

The Biden years brought historically high levels of encounters at the southern border and enormous pressure on the nation's immigration system. I do not claim that every person who crossed illegally posed a danger. Of course they did not.

But policymakers making decisions on that scale could reasonably foresee that some people within such a large population would commit crimes, drive unlawfully, traffic drugs or otherwise harm Americans.

That raises a moral question that has stayed with me throughout this experience: What was the acceptable number of American victims?

I do not know that any policymaker literally selected a number. That is precisely my point. Nobody came to families like mine and asked what level of additional risk we were willing to accept. Nobody asked me whether I was willing to pay for these policy choices with my daughter's future.

There was no voluntary status under which only Americans willing to assume that risk would experience its consequences.

Other people made the policy decisions. Families like mine were left to live with the consequences when those decisions went wrong.

Please See the Survivors

I am submitting this testimony because Carissa cannot submit her own.

She cannot sit before this Committee and describe the life she planned. She cannot tell you what it feels like to lose her independence. She cannot ask Colorado why the wheelchair she needs was denied or why her physician can order two people for her care while Medicaid denies the nursing assistance our family requested.

She cannot ask why a motorcycle received \$15,000 in restitution while nothing was ordered for her.

She cannot tell you about the future her younger sister now worries about.

So I have to be her voice.

Carissa survived what happened on March 28, 2025. I see her continuing to fight. I see changes in her. I see progress. I see pieces of my daughter fighting their way through an injured brain. I do not know how far her recovery will ultimately take her, but I know that I will fight for every inch of it.

What I should not have to do is fight her government at the same time.

Carissa has already paid an extraordinary price for government policy. Her siblings will continue living with the consequences long after I am gone.

Immigration policy is not merely a debate about numbers at the border. Sanctuary policy is not merely a disagreement between governments. Medicaid reductions are not merely entries in a budget.

There are human beings at the end of those decisions.

My daughter is one of them.

Her name is Carissa Aspnes. She was 22 years old when her life changed. She survived, but survived and recovered are not the same.

While part of why I sit here is because I need each of you to remember my daughter and what open borders and sanctuary policies did to our family, that's not the only reason. Each of you has the opportunity to choose differently for American families. You have the ability to decide that we've reached the number that makes these reckless policies no longer acceptable. I haven't come on behalf of my daughter and my family alone. I come here to prevent other families from experiencing the reality we now live.

Footnotes

- [1] CBS News Colorado, “Colorado family shares road to recovery, assistance after crash involving undocumented immigrant,” Apr. 11, 2026. Reports Aurora Police’s account of the collision, Carissa’s injuries and care needs, Marciano’s guilty plea, restitution, ICE removal, and the family’s use of VOICE. [Source](#)
- [2] U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Oversight, hearing, “The Human Toll of Sanctuary Policies: Stories from Victims and Families,” Apr. 16, 2026. Patricia Fox testified as the mother of Carissa Aspnes; Rep. Jasmine Crockett addressed the witnesses during the hearing. The testimony characterizes the substance of the exchange rather than placing unverified wording in quotation marks. [Source](#)
- [3] Colorado Department of Revenue, Division of Motor Vehicles, “Standard License FAQs,” Colorado Road and Community Safety Act (CO-RCSA/SB 251). Colorado DMV states that the program applies to temporarily legal and undocumented residents and provides an application process for an undocumented resident to obtain a standard driver license or identification card. [Source](#)
- [4] Colorado General Assembly, H.B. 19-1124, “Protect Colorado Residents From Federal Government Overreach,” enacted May 28, 2019. The act prohibits arrest or detention solely on the basis of a civil immigration detainer and restricts probation personnel from providing personal information to federal immigration authorities, while allowing cooperation involving judicial warrants and criminal investigations. [Source](#)
- [5] Colorado General Assembly, S.B. 25-276, “Protect Civil Rights Immigration Status,” enacted May 23, 2025. The act prohibits delaying release for an immigration-enforcement operation, expands civil-detainer and information-sharing restrictions, and extends limits on disclosure of nonpublic identifying information for federal immigration enforcement to political subdivisions; it expressly preserves cooperation in criminal investigations authorized by judicial process. [Source](#)
- [6] Colorado General Assembly, Joint Budget Committee Staff, Tom Dermody, “FY 2026-27 Impacts of JBC Actions on HCBS Waivers for the IDD Community,” Apr. 15, 2026. Reports \$214,975,350 in total FY2026-27 reductions, including \$107,918,609 General Fund, and details benefit, caregiver, waitlist and provider-rate changes. [Source](#)
- [7] Colorado General Assembly, Joint Budget Committee Staff, “Department of Health Care Policy and Financing FY 2026-27 Figure Setting,” Mar. 9, 2026. Reports Cover All Coloradans children’s expenditures, Reproductive Health funding, and abortion-care General Fund appropriations. [Source](#)
- [8] Colorado General Assembly, Joint Budget Committee Staff, FY2026-27 budget materials, February Cover All Coloradans forecast. Projects 33,906 enrollees and \$185,304,337 in FY2026-27 expenditures, including \$127,428,914 General Fund and \$57,875,423 federal funds. [Source](#)
- [9] Colorado General Assembly, H.B. 26-1411, “Changes to Cover All Coloradans Program,” 2026 Regular Session, signed June 4, 2026. [Source](#)
- [10] Colorado General Assembly, Joint Budget Committee Staff, “Health Care Policy and Financing Staff Briefing FY 2026-27,” Dec. 10, 2025; updated March 2026 figure-setting documents. Identifies \$5,857,600 General Fund for abortion care in FY2026-27. [Source](#)

Note Regarding Firsthand Statements

Statements in this testimony concerning conversations I personally had with investigators, prosecutors, victim advocates, ICE personnel, VOICE personnel and other individuals; what was communicated directly to my family concerning Valeria’s immigration history and decision to come to Colorado; my experience seeking information through X and Libs of TikTok; details of my visit to the ICE field office; my observations at court; information communicated to me concerning Valeria’s detention; my daughter’s Medicaid denials and physician orders; and the experiences and concerns expressed to me by my children are offered as my firsthand account. Where publicly available government or independent documentation exists for a factual assertion, I have cited it above.