

## Written Testimony — Dr. Minal Giri, Pediatrician and Executive Director, Midwest Human Rights Consortium

As a pediatrician caring for immigrant families, I am witnessing an unprecedented crisis: children's medical care is being disrupted because their parents are detained or deported by ICE, sometimes in the middle of treatment. In recent months, we have documented parents being arrested during their child's chemotherapy. Some of these children are U.S. citizens. Their medical teams cannot speak publicly, but the situations they are managing are unimaginable.

When a parent is seized by ICE, a sick child's entire care plan can collapse. Medications go unfilled, transportation to the hospital disappears, and insurance coverage lapses. Critically, the caregiver and medical decision-maker at the bedside is suddenly missing. For a child with asthma or diabetes, this can mean an emergency hospitalization. For a child with cancer, it can mean losing their chance at survival. For medically fragile children who rely on ventilators or feeding tubes, the consequences can be fatal. Without two trained caregivers to manage complex equipment, families may be forced to withdraw life-sustaining treatment — meaning a child who could have lived instead goes home to die.

Clinicians are now caring for children whose parents are detained, attempting to discharge medically complex patients with no legal guardian available, and worrying that even calling a parent for consent could expose them to arrest. Hospitals are turning to emergency guardianship and ethics consultations at the very moments when they should be focused on healing critically ill children. Some children are dying in hospitals without a parent present.

Families report being afraid to bring their children to medical appointments or even send them to school after seeing immigration agents in hospital parking lots and helicopters hovering over daycare centers and high schools. One family was chased through the parking lot of a federally qualified health center in Chicago. These actions create widespread fear that keeps families from seeking care.

This is not only an immigration issue — it is a public-health emergency. When enforcement enters spaces where children should feel safe, it undermines trust in healthcare itself. Public health depends on trust. When that trust is broken, care is delayed, disease spreads faster, and children get sicker.

### **There are immediate steps we can take:**

1. Codify hospitals, clinics, and schools as enforcement-free zones.
2. Guarantee humanitarian parole or deferred action for any parent or child in active, life-threatening medical care.

3. Establish a confidential reporting mechanism for healthcare providers when enforcement disrupts treatment.

Families are being forced to choose between safety and survival. Children undergoing chemotherapy, premature infants in intensive care — none should lose access to treatment because their parent has been detained. Every child deserves to complete their medical care with their caregiver by their side.