March 9, 2026

Dear Chairs and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Carina Bandhauer and I am a resident of Southbury. I am testifying in support of SB 91, HB 5449, and SB 397. I have worked in Danbury for 25 years as a sociologist at WCSU. Nine years ago I founded the UndocuAlly Task Force in an effort to bring dignity and respect to students on our campus after students shared stories of being mistreated because of their Hispanic heritage and/or their immigration status. They held their heads low and had internalized the trauma of their mistreatment. The Task Force has been very effective in turning our campus around at every level and celebrating our status as a Hispanic Serving Institution. However, last May students panicked upon the rumor of an ICE vehicle nearby and refused to come to campus, despite the fact that it was days before finals' week.

The students' reactions were not unreasonable. Shortly after that incident, ICE agents did begin picking brown people off the sidewalks around our campus. Some students even chose not to re-enroll this past fall ... and how can I blame them? In August, the day before our bright-eyed eager freshmen moved into their dorms, much to my horror over twenty ICE agents in tactical gear with guns and tasers descended upon the streets surrounding our campus. I'm surprised I woke up the next morning because I went to bed holding my breath, saying prayers that ICE wouldn't return on move-in day... and thank heaven they did not. I too am a parent. I have three children. My oldest is a freshman in college this year. How about you? What would you do if there were an army of men with guns descending upon or within a block of your kid's college? You and I and the kids, and everyone in the neighborhood would be freaking out, scared, and we certainly would not walk away from our kids in that moment.

Putting on my sociologist cap, I can tell you that our emotions are not unfounded.

- Recent studies have shown that "fears of enforcement among children with undocumented parents show [deleterious] ...outcomes on child well-being, especially on anxiety levels."[i]

- Studies have also found that "immigration raids have especially immediate impacts, affecting school attendance and performance, and increasing anxiety among children *even if parents had not been targeted*."[ii]

• In a study that came out last June, sociologist Joanna Dreby interviewed US citizens with mixed status family members in Connecticut and New York State, some of whom are my former students. She found that childhood and community trauma directly correlates with public policy. Specifically, her study demonstrates how growing up in an era of immigration enforcement has a measurable negative impact on young people and their families ***regardless of their immigration status***. Fully 100% of her respondents experienced traumatic disruptions to their households and family relationships, faced risk, and expressed that the US, the country where they were born, made them feel like they didn't belong.[iii]

The negative impacts of these policy-driven traumas on children, families and communities are clear. However, just as public policy can cause trauma, it can also prohibit or at least minimize it. SB 91, HB 5449, and SB 397 promise to be policies that go a long way to correct some of the wrongs of our currently misguided Federal immigration enforcement tactics. I urge you to support them. It's our Constitutional duty to ensure that spaces are truly safe and accessible, that Civil Liberties are protected, and that our federal agents be held accountable when they violate our rights. I thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,

Carina Bandhauer, PhD
Professor of Sociology
UndocuAlly Task Force Founder and Coordinator

---

[i] Dreby, 2025; Barajas-Gonzales, et al., 2022; Brabeck and Sibley, 2016; Cardoso et al., 2021; Eskenazi et al., 2019; and Landale et al., 2015.
[ii] Dreby, 2025; Capps et al., 2020; Heinrich et al., 2023; Kirksey, 2024; Kirksey and Sattin-Bajaj, 2023; and Lopez et al., 2017.
[iii] Dreby, 2025. Also, a full list of the works cited is available upon request to bandhauerc@wcsu.edu