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Congresswoman Betty McCollum  
Statement for Hearing Record  
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
“Oversight of Fraud and Misuse of Federal Funds in Minnesota: Part II”  
March 4, 2026

Thank you, Ranking Member Garcia, for allowing me to waive onto the Committee.

Thank you, Governor Walz and Attorney General Ellison, for defending Minnesota here today. I served with both of you in the House, and I am grateful that Minnesota has your leadership as the Trump Administration is enacting a campaign of political retribution against our state.

Rev. Tollgaard, thank you for being a voice for Minnesotans of all faiths and creeds who are living out our shared values, coming to the aid of their neighbors, and standing up for their rights and the rights of everyone in this nation.

Governor Walz and AG Ellison will testify today to what the Chair and all other members of this committee already know: that we do take fraud seriously in Minnesota.

Our state has built a strong network of supportive services, and we cannot allow bad actors to get away with stealing those resources away from our communities, especially our children and elders.

Governor Walz has taken many steps, both working with the state legislature and under his executive authority, to counter fraud. For example, Minnesota has established a centralized fraud investigations unit and created a Statewide Internal Audit Office.

And when criminal fraud is discovered, the state has worked with the FBI and the U.S. Attorney’s Office to prosecute those responsible. In the case of the massive fraud perpetrated by the individuals associated with Feeding Our Future—which has rightly outraged Minnesotans and the American taxpayer—the Minnesota Department of Education initiated the outreach to the FBI in April of 2021. That FBI investigation has led to criminal charges being filed on more than 75 individuals.

This committee has found no evidence in its interviews with multiple current and former state employees that would suggest that Minnesota’s Governor or Attorney General either

ignored fraud themselves or directed others to do so. There was no cover-up, and witnesses confirmed that Minnesota is serious about preventing and prosecuting fraud.

But that didn't stop the Trump Administration from using fraud as the false pretext to enact political retribution on the people of Minnesota in the form of Operation Metro Surge.

Under the direction of Department of Homeland Security Secretary Noem, an estimated 4,000 unidentified federal agents flooded into Minnesota's communities beginning in December of last year.

Despite what Republicans are trying to suggest with this hearing, Operation Metro Surge was not about addressing fraud. In fact, this surge has seriously harmed anti-fraud investigations and prosecutions by the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) for the District of Minnesota. It directly led to the resignation of the prosecutor leading the federal fraud investigation.

His resignation came after Trump's Department of Justice tried to pressure the USAO into opening an investigation into the widow of Renee Good, an American citizen who was shot and killed by an ICE agent. This outrageous ask from DOJ came on the heels of their decision to shut out Minnesota state officials from conducting a transparent investigation of the shooting.

Thirteen other prosecutors at the Minnesota USAO have also resigned because of the lack of transparency and accountability surrounding Operation Metro Surge. The limited attorneys that remain are now swamped with hundreds of wrongful detention cases filed in response to the violent and unlawful behavior of DHS agents during the surge. This is diverting them away from all other federal investigations in our state, including fraud.

Clearly, if anyone is undermining the federal investigation of fraud in Minnesota, it is the Trump Administration themselves.

But even though this surge was launched under a false pretense, it has caused very real devastation in Minnesota's communities.

We are experiencing a coordinated violation of our civil rights by our federal government.

Minnesotans have been racially profiled on a mass scale, assaulted without provocation, and kidnapped from their homes. Two United States citizens—Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti—were killed in our streets by DHS agents.

This is not the America that I learned about as a child or that I taught about as a social studies teacher. This is what we learn about when we study the behavior of dictatorships and how they rule with fear and oppression.

The Trump Administration has broken the law and dishonored the constitution during this unnecessary and vindictive surge of ICE and Border Patrol agents into our communities. They have tried to extort our state into turning over voter rolls by promising the violence and chaos they created would stop if only we gave in.

But rather than conducting any real oversight into the Trump Administration's constitutional violations, Congressional Republicans are using this hearing to continue to attack Minnesotans, Governor Walz, Attorney General Ellison, Alex Pretti, Renee Good, and her widow – casting blame on everyone except those who trampled on Americans' civil rights and due process during the occupation of Minnesota.

I am proud of my state's leaders who are testifying here today, and of Minnesotans of every walk of life who have come together in the face of this unprecedented assault to support one another and stand up for our values. We are Minnesota Strong.

Thank you, and I yield back.