

## STATEMENT OF MARIMAR MARTINEZ

My name is Marimar Martinez. I am here not only as a survivor of this Administration's actions, but as an advocate for those who do not have a voice, those that are pleading for justice, living in fear, and those who are asking for meaningful change and accountability.

I come from a beautiful family full of Immigrants and I am proud of my roots. I am born and raised in Chicago Illinois where I learned the values of resilience, community, respect, love & hope. Those lessons have shaped me since childhood and continued to guide me throughout my adult life. On October 4, 2025, those values were tested when my life was nearly taken by my own Government. This testimony is my attempt to give voice to an experience that words struggle to hold, but silence cannot justify.

On Saturday October 4, 2025, I woke up tired but committed to doing the fall cleaning I promised myself I would do that day. After two hours I had successfully filled an entire bag of good quality clothes and shoes I wanted to donate to my local Church. After a quick shower and cup of coffee, I put the bag of clothes in the back of my car and headed towards the Church. As I was getting close to the Church I noticed an SUV that appeared to be similar to the Border Patrol vehicles that had been invading our primarily Hispanic neighborhood in the previous weeks. I got a quiet but firm sense that something was not right.

As I passed the vehicle I noticed an "Uber" light in the front windshield, no front plate as required in Illinois, and an out of state license plate in back. I then noticed a uniformed Border Patrol agent in the vehicle. As a 30 year old U.S. citizen with no criminal history I naively believed that I had nothing to worry about, but I was concerned for my friends and neighbors based on the well-publicized incidents involving Border Patrol agents in our community over the past few weeks arresting anyone with brown skin for no legitimate law enforcement reason.

For the next 15 to 20 minutes I followed these Border Patrol agents through my neighborhood honking my horn and shouting "La Migra" to warn my neighbors about the presence of these agents who had been terrorizing our community over the past few weeks. As I did this my neighbors standing on their porches and sidewalks joined in this spontaneous life alert system and began setting off their car alarms to warn other neighbors.

As the Border Patrol vehicle turned onto Kedzie Avenue I continued to beep my horn and warn the community. As we approached the intersection of 39th and Kedzie, my vehicle was 2 to 3 feet to the left of the Border Patrol vehicle. He started to swerve into my lane as we were driving. I made eye contact with the driver of the Border Patrol vehicle and watched as he turned the steering wheel once again to his left and sideswiped my vehicle. I immediately froze, slammed on my brakes, and stopped my car. The Border Patrol vehicle stopped just 1 to 2 car lengths ahead of me.

It seemed like time stopped. I knew from watching the news coverage of other Border Patrol encounters in Chicago that I was in danger. I watched the video of Border Patrol agents killing Silverio Villegas Gonzalez just three weeks prior. I knew I had to get to safety before I was dragged from my car and likely beaten or killed. I drove forward and went around the Border Patrol agent who jumped out of his car and pointed his gun at me. I moved to the far-left lane, striking the curb on the far left side of Kedzie. The next thing I knew I felt a burning sensation in my arms and legs and thought I had been shot by pepper balls which I had also seen these agents fire at people in our community.

As I continued to drive past the Border Patrol agent I could hear my back passenger window shatter and I felt bullets continue to pierce my body. As I attempted to drive to a safe location, I began to feel lightheaded. I looked down and noticed blood gushing out of my arms and legs and I realized I had been shot multiple times. As I became lightheaded, I became worried I would pass out and endanger other drivers on the road.

I managed to drive a mile from where the incident happened and I pulled into the parking lot of a mechanic shop and called 911. I told the 911 operator that Border Patrol agents had just shot me and I needed help. I recall some of the workers from the shop sitting me down in a chair, as I was waiting for help but I was losing this battle, I saw my life flash before me and slowly began to think this was the end for me before losing consciousness. The next thing I remember is the EMTs putting me on stretcher and taking me to the hospital.

At the hospital I remember seeing multiple agents standing around watching me be treated for my wounds. My arms, legs and chest were all wrapped in bandages. I had 7 bullet holes in my body. I remember the agents rushing the nurses to finish up so they could take me with them.

I still felt dizzy, I was not able to fully process what had happened to me, after being at the hospital for less than 3 hours I was discharged from the hospital into the custody of the FBI. As we left the hospital I was escorted out through the back in a

wheel chair. I observed dozens of Border Patrol agents waiting outside the hospital. One of these agents came up to me with his cell phone and took my photograph. It was the same agent who had previously kept coming in and out my room and I had to repeatedly tell him to leave. I told him I did not consent to his photographing me with his cellphone, but he did not care. It still haunts me that this agent has my photo on his phone. Was this the agent who shot me? Was this a trophy photograph for him?

I was next taken to the FBI building for further processing. Because they rushed me out of the hospital so quickly, the blood started soaking through the bandages and dripping on the floor of the FBI office. I heard the agents talking about how the jail would not accept me in my current condition. I begged the agents to take me to a different hospital to give me proper medical care. Seeing me stand in a pool of my own blood, they were concerned about my health. One of the kind FBI agents brought a bag of additional bandages and worked quickly to put more dressing over my bloody bandages. The FBI agents agreed to take me to a different hospital where my wounds were retreated and I received additional medical care before being released back into law enforcement custody the following day.

The agents took me from the second hospital to the federal detention center in downtown Chicago. I have never even had a parking ticket before and now I was sitting in a federal detention center. All of this just for being the victim in a minor traffic accident. Things were surreal.

The news in the jail that evening had my story and I was being called a “domestic terrorist”! They said I “rammed” federal agents. I was in shock. If they only knew I was just months away from paying off my car and I would never intentionally damage my vehicle much less be crazy enough to hit a law enforcement vehicle. On Friday I was teaching the young children at the Montessori school and we were singing and dancing and getting ready for spooky season preparing fall activities to do the following week and on Saturday my own Government was calling me a “domestic terrorist” and I was in a federal detention center with bullet holes all over my body.

I went to Court on Monday and met my attorney Christopher Parente. He told me the Government was trying to have me kept in jail until the trial because they claimed I was a “danger to the community.” I told him I had never been in trouble before and that the government’s claims were all wrong. I looked around the courtroom and recognized over a dozen moms and dads from the Montessori school along with my boss and most of my family who came to support me. I heard my attorney tell the judge that he had received over 50 letters from the moms and dads of the kids I taught

all describing me as a caring, loving, empathetic teacher, the exact opposite of a “domestic terrorist.” I heard the government describe me as being “armed” even though I knew my gun was always inside my snapped closed holster at the bottom of my purse where I always kept it. The prosecutor told the Judge there was no allegation I have took the gun out of my purse but that did not stop DHS from continuing to say I was “armed” during this incident. My attorney explained to the Judge that I have a valid concealed carry license and that as a young woman living in Chicago I carry a gun to protect me from danger. Thankfully the Judge quickly denied the government’s detention request and released me on bond that day.

Over the next six weeks everything was surreal. I continued to work and teach my children but knowing that I was under federal indictment and facing felony charges and potentially years in federal prison over a minor car accident where the other driver was at fault and attempted to kill me was terrifying. There were times where I did not believe this was all real and then I would touch my bullet wounds and knew it was certainly real.

While I would go to work each day to take care of my children, I knew my attorney was hard at work in exposing the lies of ICE. I knew the truth of what happened. The Agent swerved into me. The Agent shot me as I drove away from him. My attorney and his investigators found video evidence demonstrating the agents were lying and I knew that no press release or tweet could ever trump the power of the truth

Two weeks before the Government dismissed all the charges in my case, I sat in a federal courtroom and watched from 20 feet away as the Border Patrol agent who attempted to kill me testified at a hearing. Agent Charles Exum. Charles Exum. My attempted executioner was Charles Exum.

Exum was in that courtroom testifying attempting to weave a coherent story explaining why he took his vehicle that I allegedly rammed out of the secured FBI Evidence garage and drove it back to Maine where the Border Patrol onsite mechanic was ordered to “buff out” the damage to the vehicle. This was all done prior to me or my attorneys having the ability to examine the vehicle. Because he did this, no expert witness would ever be able to prove that it was Exum who swerved into my vehicle.

Watching Charles Exum testify made me sick to my stomach. I grew up revering law enforcement. Prior to this incident I had great respect for local and federal law enforcement. I knew every day they put their lives on the line to keep me safe, to keep the kids at my school safe, and I thought to keep everyone in our community safe. But seeing what ICE was doing in our community at this time changed my view of law enforcement. This administration has misled the American people by claiming it

would focus on the “worst of the worst” while their actions show otherwise. Evidence from these operations including statements made under oath, reveals a pattern of misleading the public. The Government told the people they were targeting the “worst of the worst” but their actions demonstrated otherwise. They are not targeting the worst of the worst, they are targeting individuals who fit a certain profile, who simply have a certain accent, or a non-white skin color just like mine.

This raises serious concerns about fairness, discrimination, and abuse of authority. The lack of accountability for these actions is deeply troubling. We the people are tired of this misconduct and demand transparency and accountability. Seeing Charles Exum sit in a federal courtroom and lie about what happened that day completely eroded all of my trust in law enforcement. I know just because Exum is not telling the truth that I cannot hold that against all other law enforcement but to be honest I do not know if I will ever view law enforcement the same way again

As my attorney showed the Court the disgusting text messages Exum sent to his fellow border patrol buddies literally bragging about how many times he shot me, I got sick to my stomach. Seeing how a federal law enforcement officer would talk this way about shooting me, a woman who he swerved into, was both eye opening and heartbreaking. Thankfully I survived Exum’s attempted murder of me and was able to shine a light on his lies, but what about all the others who either did not survive, or were not fortunate enough to have videos proving the agents lies? I know deep down this was God’s purpose in having me survive Exum’s 5 bullets. It was for this moment to happen, so that the world could see these text messages which were a window into the soul of the U.S. Border Patrol at this critical time in our country’s history.

Fourteen days after Exum was confronted with his own disgusting text messages, my attorney called me with the wonderful news that the government was dismissing all the charges against me. We showed up in Court later that day and some of the same parents from my Montessori school who came to support me at my arraignment were there again, this time with tears in their eyes as they heard Judge Alexakis tell me I was free to go and the charges were dismissed with prejudice.

I have learned that surviving the physical wounds was only the beginning of this long and painful journey. The real battle started after. In the weeks that followed I thought I would feel great but I still struggle. I struggle with the memories of that day. The initial swerving into me by Agent Exum. The shots ringing out and the burning sensation as the bullets ripped through my skin and body. The images of the puddles of blood dripping from my bandages listening to FBI agents argue about

whether the jail would accept me in this condition, later in federal prison staring out the small window looking out onto Clark street.

And I struggle every day with the physical pain and suffering. I cannot close my hand yet to hold a pen. I try to play with the children at times at school and I am in significant pain as I attempt to do things I was so easily able to do before October 4. I attend weekly physical therapy sessions to work on these issues and hope one day I can move in the same ways I was able to move prior to October 4.

I know that what happened to me in the matter of seconds on October 4 will unfortunately be with me for a lifetime. The physical scars will always be there. In the mornings and evenings when I get dressed I stare at my body, now permanently disfigured by the five lead bullets Exum fired into me. They will be there this summer when I head to the beach with my dog and friends. They will be there when I get down on the floor with my students and work with them on their motor skill activities. And perhaps even worse, the mental scars will always be there as a reminder of the time my own government attempted to execute me and when they failed at that to vilify me..

Renee Good, Alex Pretti, Silverio Villegas Gonzalez should all be here today. I know each of them would trade my bullet wounds and lifetime of mental distress in a heartbeat to be able to be back with their loved ones this afternoon, and we must also remember the countless others souls who lost their lives at the hand of those entrusted with authority.

I know that by being a survivor it is my duty to be here today to let you elected officials know what is happening on the streets of our country because silence is no longer an option. This needs to stop now! Why do we continue to wait for more public executions when we have already seen the evidence live on our tv and computer screens? We have heard the testimonies. We have watched the pain unfold in real time. How many more lives must be lost before meaningful action is taken?

It has now been more than 6 months since Border Patrol Agent Charles Exum tried to kill me and then lied about his actions. What discipline has he faced? What about his two partners that day who attempted to cover up his unlawful actions by claiming they were boxed in not knowing that a local business surveillance video would demonstrate for the world their lies? Republicans and Democrats can both agree that we must have truthful law enforcement in this country or the American people will lose faith in the justice system. What is the status of the investigation into Agent Charles Exum?

Seeing Greg Bovino and Kristy Noem both removed from their positions have given me some hope that there are still consequences for failed leadership at the current time. I respectfully implore your committee to continue to investigate the unlawful actions of the agents involved in my shooting and the murders of Renee Good, Alex Pretti, and Silverio Villegas Gonzalez. Seeing full and swift accountability is the only way to start to rebuild trust and faith in law enforcement at this time.

The United States is and will always be a country of immigrants, built by immigrants. We are a country of love and tolerance. This is the land of the free, the land of the opportunity and a great nation that people around the world aspire to call home. And prior to this recent war on immigrants, we were a country where law enforcement acted lawfully and appropriately with respect for all human life.

I am asking you today, pleading with you, to please help bring back the America I grew up loving and idolizing. An America that values human dignity, protects life, and lives up to the ideals our Founding Fathers proudly proclaimed.

Thank you for your time.