

OPENING STATEMENT – JASON MIYARES

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*House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security, and Enforcement | May 14,
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Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee —

Before I say anything else, I want to acknowledge the woman seated with us today: Cheryl Minter. She is the mother of Stephanie Minter. She has agreed to share her story with this Committee, and there is no one braver in this room. I will let her speak to what she has lost. What I want to do is give you the *context* — because what happened to Stephanie did not happen in a vacuum.

I come to this issue personally. My mother fled Cuba. She came to this country legally, stood in line, filled out the forms, and did everything the right way — because she believed in the rule of law and in the promise of America. She left behind everything she knew because she wanted to come here **the right way**. That is what legal immigration looks like. I am the son of a legal immigrant, and I believe in immigration deeply.

What I do not believe in — what I *cannot* accept — is a system that extends preferential treatment to those who break our laws, at the direct expense of the American citizens those laws are supposed to protect. And in Fairfax County, Virginia, that is precisely what has happened. Not once. Not twice. **Repeatedly.**

Cheryl will tell you about Stephanie. But Members of this Committee, I want you to understand that Stephanie Minter is not an isolated tragedy. She is the most recent and visible name in a documented, ongoing pattern of preventable crimes — a pattern with a single common cause: the sanctuary policies of Fairfax County.

In **December 2025**, a man was shot and killed inside his own home in Reston — one day after Marvin Fernando Morales-Ortiz, a criminal illegal alien from El Salvador, was released from jail despite an active ICE detainer. He had prior arrests for aggravated assault of a police officer. Fairfax refused to hold him. He killed a man the very next day. **A single phone call from Fairfax to ICE would have saved that man's life.**

In **November 2024**, a woman was raped on a hiking trail in Herndon — days after her attacker was released from jail following a felony assault charge reduction made without consulting police. The ICE detainer was ignored. She became his next victim.

A four-year-old girl was nearly abducted in the middle of the night by an illegal alien who broke into her bedroom. Charges were reduced progressively over eighteen months — down to a misdemeanor — and then dropped entirely.

In **July 2024**, two illegal aliens stabbed a man to death at a park in Oakton. ICE had lodged multiple detainers on one of the suspects that Fairfax County refused to honor. He was released back into the community. Then he killed.

In the last several weeks — girls as young as thirteen were groped repeatedly in the hallways of a Fairfax County high school by an illegal alien enrolled as a student. ICE asked that he be held. Fairfax refused.

Same county. Same prosecutor. Same policy. Over and over again.

Members — this is not incompetence. This is not coincidence. **This is policy.**

Commonwealth's Attorney Descano published it on his own website. His office's formal written policy states that prosecutors shall, wherever possible, make charging and plea decisions that *"limit or avoid immigration consequences."* That is not prosecutorial discretion — it is **discrimination**. Against American citizens. In favor of those here illegally who commit additional crimes. The Law Enforcement Legal Defense Fund has formally petitioned the Department of Justice, which earlier this month has opened a civil rights investigation into Mr. Descano's office — arguing this policy violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. They are right.

Let me be direct about the law.

Immigration is not a shared power with states. It belongs exclusively to the federal government. Federal law — **8 U.S.C. § 1373** — expressly prohibits state and local governments from restricting communication with federal immigration authorities. Fairfax County's policies do exactly that. The anti-commandeering doctrine does not authorize releasing a man with thirty arrests and a federal removal order rather than letting ICE take him. That is not non-cooperation.

That is a deliberate choice to put a violent criminal back on the street.

We know what works — because Virginia proved it.

Governor Youngkin's Executive Order 47 established a state immigration task force. Within eight weeks: 521 criminal illegal aliens arrested — including 132 gang members. The East Coast leader of MS-13, living in Prince William County, was captured. ICE called Virginia a national model.

Governor Spanberger dismantled it. She signed an order ending state cooperation with ICE just **nineteen days before Stephanie Minter was killed**. She now has a bill on her desk that would prohibit every jurisdiction in Virginia from cooperating with ICE. We know what she'll do.

This Committee has the power to change the equation — permanently. Fund 287(g) agreements. Condition federal law enforcement grants on detainer compliance. Give Section 1373 real enforcement teeth. Give families like Cheryl Minter's the right to hold sanctuary jurisdictions accountable in federal court.

Government's first and most fundamental duty is to protect the people it governs.

Sanctuary policies represent a catastrophic and willful failure of that duty.

My mother came to this country because she believed the law would protect her. Cheryl Minter believed the same thing. Stephanie Minter deserved the same thing. Virginians are paying the price. And I am asking this Committee to make it stop.

Thank you, Chairman. I welcome the Committee's questions.