

October 21, 2026

David Venturella
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Acting Director Venturella:

I write on behalf of a community in mourning. On October 15, a 16-year-old forced his way into Silver Rail Elementary School in Bend and killed three children, ages 5, 8 and 11, and a teacher. Two more people, a 7-year-old student and a teacher, were critically wounded. Bend will forever be changed by this unimaginable loss.

On the very morning our children were killed, ICE agents arrived in Deschutes County. They are still here, and they are keeping frightened families from the help this community has come together to offer them.

I respectfully request that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement cease its non-emergency enforcement operations in Bend and Deschutes County so that families can heal and access resources without fear, on top of grief.

The weeks ahead will ask a great deal of every family in Central Oregon. Children are returning to classrooms that no longer feel safe. Parents are attending vigils, funerals, and counseling sessions. Teachers, first responders, and healthcare workers are carrying a heavy load. Recovery depends on people being willing to show up: to seek mental health care, to talk with investigators, to gather with neighbors and to send their kids back to school. The last thing we need is some goons with masks exploiting this tragedy to terrorize our community further.

Right now, ICE is standing between grieving families and the help they need. Silver Rail's students come from every background, and my office is hearing that immigrant families are staying away from the mental health and community services set up for them. Parents fear that a trip to a school, a clinic, a church or a vigil could end in detention or deportation. We've even heard of parents unwilling to pick up their kids' belongings from the Silver Rail investigation because of that fear. And who could blame them? Over the last year, we've seen masked federal agents drag people off our streets, detain American citizens and legal residents, and kill people in broad daylight.

As a result, children are grieving in isolation, families who need trauma care are going without it, and witnesses may hesitate to come forward. That harms not only immigrant households but the recovery of the entire community.

Pausing enforcement is not a political concession. It is basic decency and professionalism. Federal agencies routinely adjust operations in the wake of natural disasters and other emergencies so that people can seek shelter and aid without fear. The aftermath of a school shooting calls for the same judgment. At a minimum, I ask that ICE:

1. Cease non-emergency arrests, surveillance, and enforcement activity in Bend and Deschutes County while the community recovers.
2. Refrain from any enforcement at or near schools, hospitals, counseling centers, places of worship, memorial sites and vigils in the region.
3. Notify my office in advance of any operation in the area that ICE believes cannot be deferred, and explain why.

I ask that you respond to this request in writing by Monday, October 26. My staff stands ready to work with your office and with local leaders to support the families of Bend through this period.

The people of Bend are leaning on one another right now, neighbor to neighbor. Grief does not check immigration status. Every family in Bend deserves to mourn, heal, and seek help without fear. I urge you to let them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Janelle B. Bynum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Janelle Bynum
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Markwayne Mullin, Secretary of Homeland Security
Andrea Quinones, Seattle Field Office Director, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Removal Operations
The Honorable Melanie Kebler, Mayor of Bend
Deschutes County Board of Commissioners

