

PAROMITA SHAH, Executive Director, Just Futures Law

Witness Testimony:

My name is Paromita Shah, and I am the Executive Director of Just Futures Law, a legal nonprofit developing legal strategies, including litigation and policy, at the intersection of immigrant justice, technology accountability, civil liberties, and democracy protection. Our strong focus on surveillance and data technologies and experience building durable legal and political protections brought us to this report. For the last 25 years, I have worked on legal and advocacy strategies to address mass deportation, criminalization, and surveillance in close partnership with grassroots movements.

In 2025, Immigration and Customs Enforcement acting director Todd Lyons stated, “We need to get better at treating this like a business.” Lyons said he wanted to see a deportation process “like [Amazon] Prime, but with human beings.” This deeply problematic statement is now shaping reality. Billions in public monies are for DHS surveillance without any outside mechanisms for compliance and oversight, while generating massive revenues for tech moguls and their companies.

ICE and CBP are not only immigration policing agencies; they are also central pillars of the new security state with a rapidly expanding surveillance apparatus powered by AI-driven technologies, private contractors, and massive data-sharing systems. DHS hosts the largest biometric repository in the federal government and is actively involved in efforts to force -combine IRS, health, housing and social security data with immigration data. Through biometric databases, data analytics facial recognition, mobile phone extraction, license plate readers, drones, social media monitoring, and data broker networks, DHS agencies are now funded to build surveillance systems designed to identify, track, profile, and target people at an unprecedented scale.

These systems extend far beyond immigrants. The same technologies can monitor the population at large, expanding government power to surveil political activity, dissent, protest movements, and everyday life. The Department of Justice (DOJ)—the agency charged with enforcing US laws for everyone in the country—has become DHS’s law firm: accelerating the expansion of DHS’s policing powers, dismantling core due-process protections, and working with DHS to identify political targets, namely ICE community observers, for prosecution.

Here are three impacts that I believe are relevant for this committee:

First, the money infusion means the inventory of DHS AI uses is outpacing oversight. The use of AI is largely unregulated. Oversight agencies found that Biden era executive orders failed to comply with its own civil rights mandates and lacked proper governance. Now, the astronomically increased DHS budget has drawn in Silicon Valley CEOs who see the lack of oversight and unmonitored government contracts as a cash cow for their companies and start ups. Dozens of companies will benefit, but Palantir and Anduril are, by far, the largest. We need

guardrails, oversight, transparency, and mechanisms to halt sole source contracts, redacted contracts and fast track procurement.

Second: State laws and policies on tech, AI or otherwise - especially those that protect state data from DHS intrusion - now face threats from the Trump Administration. The AI Action Plan states that they must overrun any state policy or law that opposes their agenda, either through a DOJ AI litigation task force or through legislation that pre-empts state laws. These efforts pose an existential threat to organizing and advocacy that is needed to protect state resources and communities from unjust and unlawful federal intrusion.

Third, these oligarchs - many of whom are formally or informally embedded in our government - are hacking the US government, shaping AI and tech policy from where they sit - whether it's from the Presidential Council of Advisors for Science and Technology, or as the Chief Intelligence Office at DHS. New EOs require that surveillance tech, including AI, will play a role in deciding who is Antifa, a domestic terrorist, an anti-American, and who is detained and deported from the United States.

Biography:

Paromita Shah is the Founding Executive Director of Just Futures Law. For more than twenty-five years, she has advanced legal and advocacy strategies to address mass deportation, criminalization, and surveillance in close partnership with grassroots movements, including defending them against retaliation and threats for exercising freedom of speech. In 2019, she co-founded Just Futures Law in response to a call from immigrant rights organizers. The organization provides litigation and legal policy support to grassroots advocacy campaigns, with particular expertise in surveillance and data technologies.

Ms. Shah has led national advocacy, education, and training efforts, provided legal assistance to hundreds of people in immigration detention, and trained and mentored hundreds of attorneys. Her expertise is often sought by journalists, academics, and advocates. She has also authored numerous reports and resources, including co-authoring *The Tech Behind ICE: Oligarchs, Immigration Enforcement and the Threat to Democracy* (2026), *HART Attack: How DHS's Massive Biometrics Database Will Supercharge Surveillance and Threaten Rights* (2022), and *Who's Behind ICE: The Tech and Data Companies Fueling Deportations* (2018). Her work has been featured in NPR, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Nation, the Guardian, PBS and other major outlets.

Ms. Shah is a 2023 Rockwood National LIO Yearlong Fellow, was a member of the Aspen Digital Council for a Fair Data Future, and received the 2020 Outstanding Clinical Alumni Award from Suffolk University Law School. Previously, she served as Associate Director of the National Project of the National Lawyers Guild, Detention Project Director at the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition in Washington, DC, and staff attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services. She is a graduate of Suffolk University Law School and McGill University in Montreal, QC.

TANIA UNZUETA, Political Director and co-founder, Mijente

Witness Testimony:

My name is Tania Unzueta. I'm the Political Director at Mijente and one of the contributors to the report *The Tech Behind ICE: Oligarchs, Immigration Enforcement and the Threat to Democracy*. In 2018, Mijente, together with Paromita Shah and Mizue Aizeki, published the seminal report *Who's Behind ICE: The Tech and Data Companies Fueling Deportations*. That report exposed how private technology and data companies were powering DHS enforcement and profiting from deportation. We named companies like Palantir, LexisNexis, and Amazon, corporations that remain central to ICE's operations today.

Nearly ten years later, that same surveillance infrastructure is generating even greater profits. Palantir alone has received more than \$1.8 billion in federal contracts since 2025, including a \$1 billion DHS agreement that allows ICE and CBP to buy its tools without competitive bidding. But what must be clear from the start is this: this is no longer just about profit. It is about power.

As we put together this report, we saw that the infrastructure we exposed nearly a decade ago has not only expanded, it is now deeply embedded in government. These corporations, and in some cases the people who lead them, have moved from outside contractors to "corner office" positions of power. They are shaping not only how immigration enforcement is carried out, but the policies behind it.

These systems are devastating for immigrants targeted through raids, detention, and deportation. But the harm does not stop there. They also threaten the constitutional rights and privacy of everyone who believes in free speech, freedom of the press, democracy, and the right to organize.

Because of this technology, today immigration enforcement and surveillance of the public is broader, more invasive, less accountable, and more secretive. AI systems process biometric, location, and social media data to identify and target people, often without judicial oversight or regard to constitutional rights. Through data brokers and data-sharing agreements, that surveillance reaches far beyond individual targets into entire neighborhoods. And because so much of this system runs through proprietary algorithms and opaque contracts, it is much harder for the public, and even elected officials, to know what data is being shared or how to regulate it.

In Cook County, Illinois, we spent six years uncovering one of those loopholes. Although the county passed protections in 2011 to limit information sharing with ICE, our contract analysis found that Appriss, a company contracted to notify survivors of domestic violence, had language allowing data-sharing with ICE. It took 10 years for elected officials to even know that loophole existed. Only now local advocates are coming close to changing the policy to close it. We have found contracts like this across the country, and we know there are more.

As our report makes clear, Congress has a responsibility to act. That starts with investigating and holding accountable the corporations facilitating this administration's authoritarian agenda, companies like Palantir that have built and profited from the expansion of immigration enforcement. For too long, Democrats and Republicans alike have invested billions of taxpayer dollars into deportations while giving in to the lobbying power of this industry.

Congress must not only investigate these contracts, data-sharing systems, and revolving door relationships. It must also defund the agencies driving this surveillance expansion. At a time when millions of people in this country are struggling to afford food, housing, and healthcare, we must ask: do we need billions more flowing into surveillance technology and the hands of tech oligarchs? If we care about real safety, those resources should be invested in education, healthcare, and housing for our communities.

Biography:

Tania Unzueta is the Political Director and co-founder of Mijente and a fierce advocate for the rights of undocumented immigrants around the country. She is also co-founder of Organized Communities Against Deportations (OCAD). Unzueta has organized with the National Day Laborer Organizing Network and co-founded the Immigrant Youth Justice League.

Unzueta came to Chicago from Mexico City with her parents and sister when she was 10. She initially became involved in immigration politics as a high school student fighting for the DREAM Act. In 2010 she became nationally known for being one of the participants of the first civil disobedience by undocumented students in Tucson, Arizona.

JESSE FRANZBLAU, Associate Director of Policy, NIJC

Witness Testimony:

Thank you, Congresswoman Ramirez and Congresswoman Simon, members of the CPC Immigration Task Force, for holding this important hearing. My name is Jesse Franzblau and I serve as Associate Policy Director for the National Immigrant Justice Center, headquartered in Chicago, IL.

For over four decades, NIJC has dedicated itself to ensuring human rights protections and access to justice for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. NIJC provides direct legal services to approximately 10,000 low-income individuals each year and advocates on behalf of our immigrant communities through policy advocacy, impact litigation, and public education.

I am grateful for this shadow hearing focused on the surveillance technology that impacts the communities that NIJC serves and the broader public at large. Today, I will speak about: 1) how surveillance programs have dramatically expanded over the years; 2) how these programs are used to carry out sweeping warrantless arrests; and, 3) provide recommendations for lawmakers to curb the waste and abuse associated with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) surveillance programs.

1. The expanding surveillance apparatus

The budget for DHS surveillance technology has increased dramatically over the years. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are currently holding approximately [\\$100 billion](#) of the [\\$140 billion](#) that Congress provided these agencies through reconciliation last year. This year, on June 9th, Congress again relied on the same fast-track reconciliation budget procedure to bypass regular appropriations and allocate an additional \$70 billion to these abusive agencies [through S.2](#). This means more people disappeared and more invasive technology, without any safeguards to protect privacy rights or avert human rights abuses.

The administration also continues to seek more authority for surveillance programs and create new data collection systems. This includes creating databases on immigration attorneys, federal [databases](#) on voters and taxpayers, seeking to re-authorize sweeping warrantless surveillance powers, and more. It is imperative for Congress to hold the executive branch in check, divest from these abusive agencies and place serious restrictions on funding for surveillance-related authorities and programs.

2. Sweeping arrests without warrants

Hundreds of Illinois immigrants filed wrongful detention lawsuits after the Trump Administration's Operation Midway Blitz began in September 2025. These arrest operations tore at the social fabric of Chicago communities, disproportionately harming immigrants and people of color.

Operation Midway Blitz also exposed a particular vulnerability with federal agents' open access to Illinois residents' data. In particular, access to Illinois driver's license information, vehicle

registration information, and other state data has made possible countless warrantless arrests of individuals—often in violent ways, such as breaking car windows and ripping individuals out of their cars on the basis of the information DHS just accessed. DHS uses these various tech tools to systematize their racial profiling and constitutional violations.

The State of Illinois and City of Chicago filed a [lawsuit](#) in January 2026, which provides details of the abuses carried out during Operation Midway Blitz. The complaint describes how ICE and Border Patrol utilized [Mobile Fortify](#) in the field more than 100,000 times after the launch of the application in June 2025. Federal agents used the Mobile Fortify application to scan the fingerprints and faces of people in Illinois as they were carrying out sweeping arrests. The plaintiffs in the case argue that ICE's growing use of biometric tracking violates the Illinois Constitution and privacy laws. The complaint also details how ICE and Border Patrol carried out hundreds of warrantless arrests in a discriminatory manner without probable cause or individualized assessments of flight risk.

In other cities, where there are [challenges](#) on warrantless arrests, we have also seen how invasive surveillance technology is central to sweeping arrest operations. In a case brought by Innovation Law Lab challenging warrantless arrests in Portland, ICE officers provided [testimony](#) describing the use of the Mobile Fortify app, as well as an application called "Elite" and license plate readers. Agents use the application Elite like Google Maps, to see how many individuals with an "immigration nexus" are believed to be in a certain area. This "nexus" could mean any history of contact with immigration officials. The Innovation Law Lab complaint describes how officers use license plate readers to run plate numbers and cross-reference them with other databases. The technology leads to federal agents making warrantless arrests based on unreliable, unsubstantiated and unverifiable information.

3. Divest from ICE and Border Patrol & protect communities from abuses

The State of Illinois and the City of Chicago recognized the harms caused by ICE and Border Patrol many years ago, and adopted the Illinois TRUST Act and the Welcoming City Ordinance. Under the Illinois TRUST Act and Chicago's Welcoming City Ordinance, local police are strictly prohibited from collaborating with federal immigration agents. Officers cannot stop, search, arrest, or share nonpublic information with ICE based solely on a person's immigration status. Local authorities have a vested interest in not just preserving their resources but averting collusion with a federal government that is intent on breaking the law. NIJC has seen this firsthand in the Chicago area, where our organization has represented hundreds of people in ICE and Border Patrol unlawfully abducted from our streets. State and local governments should review current practices for data sharing with the federal government, restricting data sharing where possible that is not otherwise required by law. These laws must be strengthened to close loopholes and restrict the use of surveillance technology by federal agents on our immigrant communities.

Lawmakers must also act at the federal level, including by cutting funds for ICE or Border Patrol, and re-directing funds away from surveillance related contracts and towards communities. Congress can also place restrictions on funding for surveillance technologies through the FY27 Appropriations process, place restriction on surveillance authorities, freezing any new contracts,

requiring stringent reviews of existing programs, require robust firewalls so DHS cannot use and abuse data from other agencies, and ending the programs found to systematically violate privacy, civil rights and civil liberties rights.

Biography:

Jesse Franzblau is Associate Director of Policy, National Immigrant Justice Center. Jesse works on NIJC's Transparency and Human Rights Project and conducts investigative research on human rights abuses at the U.S.-Mexico border. Previously, Jesse worked at *Open the Government*, directing the FOIA projects and specializing in open government laws to increase access to information on immigration policies.

BRUCE NESTOR, attorney, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Witness Testimony:

My name is Bruce Nestor. I am an immigration and civil rights attorney in Minneapolis, MN. I am here today to share with you a ground level view of the experience of the people of Minnesota who mobilized to defend their neighbors and resist the federal invasion of their communities by paramilitary, federal agents during Operation Metro Surge from December 2025 to March of 2026.

Minnesotans who stood up for their immigrant neighbors and resisted unlawful acts by federal agents were confronted by heavily armed, masked federal agents who routinely used excessive force to punish and intimidate citizens engaged in lawful monitoring and protest of federal law enforcement. These federal agents also sought to retaliate against and intimidate citizens by capturing biometric data to apparently build a federal database of persons identified as "agitators" and used vast databases to obtain information to identify and confront citizens at their homes and business.

The acts during Operation Metro Surge of excessive force, surveillance, data capture, and use of databases to access personal information about citizens were not connected to any legitimate law enforcement purpose. Rather, these actions by federal agents were part of a coordinated campaign to threaten citizens and state elected officials alike to achieve purely political goals of the Department of Justice and executive branch. The Administration specifically promised a "day of reckoning and retribution" against Minnesota unless it released voter rolls to the federal government, altered state and local laws to provide for unlimited cooperation with federal immigration enforcement, and targeted SNAP recipients for fraud investigations – all political demands of the Administration unrelated to immigration enforcement.

The coordination of state violence in the streets and prosecution in the courts was also evident in the statements and actions of the Department of Justice. On January 22, 2026, the forceful arrest of civil rights lawyer Nekima Levy Armstrong (and the publishing of a doctored, racially demeaning photo of her), was coordinated to correspond with the visit of Vice President Vance to Minneapolis which was announced as focusing on "restoring law and order in Minnesota." Similarly, on January 28, 2026, the Department of Justice coordinated the charging of 22 persons with the simultaneous visit of former Attorney General Pamela Bondi to Minnesota, along with the publication of arrest photos in violation of court orders and false allegations of violence, riot and assault on social media.

As noted by the Chief Judge for the United States District Court of Minnesota Patrick Schiltz, in an order quashing subpoenas issued by the federal government to Governor Tim Walz, Attorney General Keith Ellison, and the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul, "the subpoenas were issued as part of an unconstitutional effort to coerce Minnesota officials into assisting the federal government with enforcing civil immigration laws and to harass and retaliate against them for failing to do so."

The National Lawyers Guild, of which I am a part, documented over 245 federal arrests and charges during Operation Metro Surge. Only approximately 36 of these arrests resulted in formal criminal charges, with two-thirds of these charges dismissed to date. Federal agents engaged in a pattern of arrests based on lies and manufactured evidence in apparent compliance with directions from Associate Deputy Attorney General Aakash Singh "Go big and go loud," to make arrests that could "blasted out" to create a false, politicized narrative that federal agents were under attack by violent, left-wing agitators. These arrests were facilitated by an aggressive array of tactics: seizing cell phones, collecting DNA from demonstrators, use of automatic license plate readers, facial recognition technology, and subpoenas to technology accounts for social media accounts.

A broad group of legal community partners interviewed and documented a pattern of federal actions which was designed to intimidate and retaliate against persons for engaging in protected speech and association under the First Amendment. In granting a preliminary injunction in *Tincher v. Noem*, United States District Court Judge Katherine Menendez found substantial evidence to conclude that federal agents had been engaged in a pattern of retaliation against peaceful protest activity, had arrested or detained persons in retaliation for their protected conduct without probable cause that they had committed a crime, used pepper-spray and non-lethal munitions on peaceful protesters, and stopped and detained persons in their vehicles without reasonable suspicion.

The Administration's aggressive acceleration of the use of technology and artificial intelligence in its militarized immigration enforcement campaign not only threatens the privacy and safety of immigrants and citizens alike but is also done with the intent of facilitating the repression of any opposition to the Administration and its increasingly authoritarian and unconstitutional behavior. What we have seen in Minnesota over the past six months is the use of para-military force to suppress political opposition. The growth in surveillance technology and use of artificial intelligence to augment that physical force poses a direct threat to our remaining democratic institutions and freedoms and requires immediate action by Congress before the forces of repression have grown too strong to be stopped by democratic and popular means.

Biography:

Bruce Nestor (virtual) is a criminal defense, immigration, and civil rights attorney in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His community work and political organizing focus on immigrant rights, criminal justice reform, racial justice, and combatting government repression using the legal system. He has also traveled to Nicaragua, Cuba, Palestine, Arizona, Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Turkey, and Egypt as a member of human rights and solidarity delegations.

Nestor graduated from the University of Iowa Law School in 1992, with highest honors. Nestor is the past President of the National Lawyers Guild (2000-2003), a national bar association of progressive attorneys, law students, and legal workers, founded in 1937 as the first racially integrated bar association in the United States. He is a past president of the Minnesota Chapter

of the National Lawyers Guild, a member of the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild, and a member of the Minnesota Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

SENATOR GRACIELA GUZMÁN, Illinois State Senator

Witness Testimony:

Chairwoman Ramirez, thank you for convening this hearing. I am Illinois State Senator Graciela Guzmán, proud daughter of Salvadoran immigrants, representing Chicago's Northwest Side. In my district, rapid response is neighbors answering the phone at five in the morning when ICE is spotted. It is attorneys racing across Chicago before someone is transferred hundreds of miles away. It is clergy and volunteers documenting raids and comforting children and families.

As they disappear thousands of neighbors and murder Illinoisans like Silverio Villegas Gonzalez, this work becomes more urgent. Rapid response, legal help, and mutual aid are often the difference between someone disappearing into detention without an attorney and whether children have someone waiting for them after school.

Illinois chooses a different path. We passed the Trust Act, strengthened sanctuary protections, ended 287(g) agreements, and continue to invest in healthcare, legal aid, and immigrant services because safety is what government should provide, not terror.

These laws did not happen overnight. They came from decades of organizing and people demanding government keep its promise to every resident, regardless of where they were born. Here is what should alarm every member of Congress: the federal government is not trying to change Illinois law. It is trying to undermine and work around it.

That is contempt for our laws, for immigrant families, and for everyone standing between our people and cruelty. Let's be clear. The administration does not have to repeal the Trust Act if it can buy the data that lets it bypass it.

Palantir, LexisNexis, Amazon, and data brokers have found profit in helping build a militarized police state. They may not set immigration policy, but they make it possible to surveil and separate families at a scale our laws were never designed to anticipate.

That is why Illinois is responding with a new generation of protections.

I introduced SB1995 because families should not have to wonder whether taking their child to school, going to a health clinic, or asking for help puts them on ICE's radar. Information shared for care or opportunity should never become a tool for immigration enforcement.

With SALT and the Illinois Bivens Act, Illinois is building protection and accountability when federal officials violate constitutional rights in our state.

I never imagined that, as a state legislator, I would write laws to protect Illinois residents from their own federal government. But that is exactly where we are. This administration is forcing states like Illinois to legislate against harms we never should have had to anticipate.

And if we think this ends with immigrants, history tells us otherwise. Every database expanded, every contract signed, every algorithm deployed, and every constitutional protection ignored becomes the foundation for the next abuse of power.

Congress must stop that cycle: abolish DHS, end federal data purchases that sidestep constitutional protections, hold corporations accountable, and protect states defending our people.

My parents would remind us: El sol no se puede tapar con un dedo. La verdad siempre sale a la luz. No hay mal que dure cien años. The truth matters. Authoritarianism will have its end. But none of that happens on its own. It happens because people organize, tell the truth, and refuse to give up on each other.

The truth is that our families belong here. Our state laws matter. Illinois will keep defending both, even from our own federal government.

Biography:

Graciela Guzmán (virtual) is an Illinois State Senator. She is a health care and education organizer, formerly at the Healthy Illinois campaign, Protect Our Care Illinois and the Chicago Teachers Union. Over a decade in community-driven advocacy to protect, expand, and improve health care, including leading efforts to make Illinois the first state in the country to offer health care to immigrant adults. Active part of mutual aid efforts in Chicago's northwest side during community responses to support neighbors impacted by COVID-19 and newcomer asylum seekers. The first Salvadoran to serve in the Illinois General Assembly. She received a B.A. in anthropology from Grinnell College; member of the Grinnell College Board of Trustees.