

To: AFT Local Leader

From: Randi Weingarten

Date: June 25, 2019

Subject: Supporting Immigrant Students and Families

Last week, the Trump administration unveiled plans to carry out mass arrests and deportations in major cities across the country, targeting migrant children and families who have sought refuge in the United States. On the list: Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York and San Francisco. The threat of mass deportations and raids by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is a calculated attack to stoke fear, criminalize immigrants, shut down our southern border and turn away people seeking asylum. While the ICE raids have been temporarily called off, our immigrant students and their families who are living in fear need to know that they are not alone.

Raids take an emotional, physical and psychological toll on developing children, youth and entire communities. Raids produce chronic fear, anxiety and stress, and cause long-term harm to children's health and well-being, including U.S. citizen children.

Research shows that children who witness a parent's arrest, particularly in a home setting, are more likely to suffer from mental health and behavioral problems. Raids also put an unnecessary strain on communities, schools, child care providers, health centers, faith-based institutions and other organizations that serve immigrant families.

It's critically important that educators, school support staff and service providers know the tools and resources available to help prepare youth and families for an ICE raid. The AFT and its partners have created a [Deportation Defense Guide in English](#) and [Spanish](#) to help families create an emergency plan and be better prepared if ICE comes to their door. We also have a comprehensive guide in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) for educators and school support staff to assist immigrant students and their families during these difficult times. This guide includes fact sheets, "know your rights" palm cards, model resolution language and action items that can be taken to protect families.

If you would like a care package of these print materials to share with members and community partners, please call the AFT Human Rights and Community Relations Department at 202-879-4434.

It is against the law for ICE enforcement actions to take place in preK-12 schools, colleges, marked school bus stops and other sensitive locations, as outlined in the Department of Homeland Security's [Sensitive Locations Memo](#). If ICE violates these guidelines, please let us know right away. The AFT Human Rights and Community Relations Department and the AFT Legal Department are here to help you to assess possible community and legal responses.

AFT members play a critical role in helping to end the criminalization, detention and deportation of students and families. **Our members are often the first responders to potential threats in schools and are the frontline protectors of our students.** Criminalizing immigrants, shutting down our southern border and turning away people seeking refuge based on religion or nationality runs contrary to the fabric of this great nation, which was founded by immigrants fleeing tyranny and persecution

The AFT will continue to work with our partners to stand up for our students, their families and our communities. We will continue to ensure all schools follow the Supreme Court's ruling in *Plyler v. Doe*, which states that all children, regardless of immigration status, have a [constitutional right](#) to a K-12 education. And we will stand against enforcement measures that generate widespread fear, encourage discrimination and institutionalize racial profiling.

We care. We fight. We show up. And we're going to do everything in our power to protect our students and their families. Please be in touch and don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

In unity,

Randi Weingarten
AFT President

AFT Key Resources to Support Immigrant Students and Families

- Deportation Defense Guide in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- Immigrant and Refugee Children: A Guide for Educators and School Support Staff in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- [Standing United to Protect the Rights of Immigrant Students and Their Families: Toolkit](#)