

OPENING STATEMENT – JASON MIYARES

48th Attorney General of Virginia

Chairman Schmitt, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee —

I want to begin with a name.

Stephanie Minter.

She was 41 years old. A mother. From Fredericksburg, Virginia. Her family described her as — and I want you to hear this —

“A Beam of Light in Dark Places”

On February 23rd of this year, Stephanie was standing at a bus stop in Hybla Valley, Fairfax County. She was stabbed to death.

Her killer had been arrested more than thirty times. He was in this country illegally. A federal judge had issued a final order for him to be removed — six years ago. An ICE detainer was lodged — and Fairfax County refused to honor it. The police warned the prosecutor, in writing, repeatedly, that this man, a menace, would kill someone.

The Police were right.

Stephanie Minter should not have died. And, that is why I am here today.

But I need this Committee to understand something critical: Stephanie Minter is not an isolated tragedy. She tragically is but a recent and visible name in a documented pattern of preventable crimes committed against Virginians — a pattern with a common cause.

In December 2025, a Fairfax County man was shot and killed in his own home — one day after an illegal alien with seven prior charges, including a prior murder charge, was released from jail. The ICE detainer was refused. The charges were dropped. He was freed. And then he killed a man. The victim, an innocent Virginian, could have been spared with one simple and quick phone call from Fairfax to ICE. A shocking as this sounds, it is that simple – a quick phone call would have saved this man’s life.

A woman was raped on a popular walking trail in Herndon — days after her attacker was released from jail early by a prosecutor who had already reduced his felony assault charge without consulting police.

A four-year-old girl was nearly abducted in the middle of the night by an illegal alien who broke into her bedroom. The prosecutor progressively dismantled the charges over eighteen months — down to a misdemeanor — and then dropped them entirely when a judge called the plea deal inadequate.

And in the last few weeks alone — girls as young as thirteen were groped repeatedly in the hallways of Fairfax High School by an illegal alien enrolled as a student. A child predator offered Roblox gaming currency to children under ten years old in exchange for explicit images — he had already been arrested for public sexual misconduct and released without notification to ICE.

This all happened in the same county. The same prosecutor. The same policy. Over and over again and just a few miles away from here.

Members of this Committee — this is not incompetence or coincidence. This is policy. Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano published it on his own website. Let me read it to you:

"Wherever possible, Steve (Descano) will make charging and plea decisions that limit or avoid immigration consequences."

That is a formal, written policy giving criminal illegal aliens preferential treatment in the justice system. It is not discretion. It is discrimination — against American citizens, in

favor of those here illegally who commit additional crimes. And Mr. Descano and his acolytes are 100% committed to this malignant policy.

A citizen with thirty-plus arrests would not have gotten the same treatment Abdul Jalloh got, Stephanie Minter's depraved killer. A citizen who broke into a child's bedroom would not have had charges reduced to a misdemeanor. The Law Enforcement Legal Defense Fund has formally petitioned the Department of Justice to open a civil rights investigation into 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. Article I, Section 8 gives Congress the authority to establish a uniform rule of naturalization — and that word, uniform, is not decorative. It means a patchwork of local non-compliance is exactly what the Founders sought to prevent.

Federal law — 8 U.S.C. Section 1373 — expressly prohibits state and local governments from restricting communication with federal immigration authorities. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisor's policy does exactly that. It is not passive non-cooperation. It is a policy which affirmatively calls for the obstruction of federal law.

The anti-commandeering doctrine that sanctuary jurisdictions invoke says the federal government cannot conscript local officers as immigration agents. That is true. But it does not say you can release a man with thirty arrests and a federal removal order from your jail — rather than let ICE take him. That is not non-cooperation. That is a choice to put a violent criminal back on the street, and that choice has time and again led to profound consequences.

We know what works — because Virginia did it.

Governor Youngkin's Executive Order 47 created a state immigration task force. Within eight weeks, five hundred and twenty-one criminal illegal aliens were arrested — including a hundred and thirty-two gang members. The East Coast leader of MS-13, living in Prince William County, was captured. ICE praised Virginia as a national model. That model was dismantled in an instant by Governor Spanberger — who signed an order ending state cooperation with ICE just nineteen days before Stephanie Minter was killed. Governor Spanberger right now has a Bill on her desk that prohibits all jurisdictions in Virginia from cooperating with ICE. What do you think she will do with that Bill? Odds are she will sign it into law.

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

I served as Virginia's Attorney General because I believe 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.

Virginians are paying the price.

And Stephanie Minter and her family are regrettably proof.

Thank you, Chairman Schmitt. I look forward to the Committee's questions.