



January 28, 2026

The Honorable Representative Angie Craig (MN-2)

2052 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Angie Craig,

On behalf of the Dakota County Board of Commissioners, we call on your leadership during this critical and challenging time in Minnesota. We value the partnerships Dakota County has developed across all levels of government as we work to provide services in an efficient and effective way for residents and taxpayers.

We write to share the impacts of recent and ongoing federal immigration enforcement activity as part of Operation Metro Surge in Dakota County. The deployment of thousands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection personnel to Minnesota is affecting County operations and our ability to deliver services, and it is impacting the local workforce and the communities we serve.

This is not about debating immigration policy — that is a federal responsibility and we respect that. This is about our ability as the third-largest county in Minnesota to serve our residents, maintain public safety, be good stewards of tax dollars and support the well-being of our community.

Impacts on county operations and workforce

Federal enforcement activity is directly affecting how we deliver services and fulfill our statutory responsibilities. Operation Metro Surge impacts include:

- **Increased demand on public safety.** The Dakota County Sheriff's Office is dedicating additional resources to respond to reports of ICE activity and community concerns, often with limited communication or coordination with federal partners. We are also seeing an increase in 911 calls associated with fear, confusion and public response to enforcement activity.
- **Significant impacts on employee well-being and safety.** Employees have been followed or stopped by federal immigration officers while lawfully performing County duties. Many others have witnessed enforcement activity in their work areas. Our workforce is experiencing trauma, fear and stress related to the enforcement activities in their personal lives that is spilling over into their work, affecting concentration, morale and mental health.
- **Workforce disruptions and safety concerns.** Private contractors and vendors have expressed concerns about staff willingness to work on County projects, which may delay or derail important facilities projects such as roof replacements. An international contractor working on our hydro-

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electric dam is concerned about the safety of international workers being sent to Minnesota, which may delay the project and cost the county millions of dollars.

- **Program and facility disruptions.** Park and library programs and facility reservations have been disrupted or canceled, and partner organizations are reconsidering planned events. Residents and partners have made decisions to change or reduce in-person participation based on the potential of ICE being present.
- **Strain on mandated services.** We have received inquiries to our child protection line and provided support and consultation in each case, including a handful of cases in which parents have been taken by ICE. In the area of student truancy, County staff are working closely with schools as student attendance patterns shift. There has been an increase in the number of households turning to the County for rent assistance because they are afraid to go to work.

Impacts on the community

Beyond operational impacts, we are seeing significant and measurable effects across Dakota County:

- **Food insecurity and isolation.** Many residents — including U.S. citizens and lawful residents — are sheltering at home and not going to work, raising concerns about mental health, food security, housing stability and long-term well-being. A County-hosted food shelf event recently ran out of food. Community members have collected supplies to deliver to families who are afraid to leave home.
- **Increased reliance on emergency supports.** Emergency food distribution and nonprofit assistance have risen sharply, straining community systems.
- **Educational disruption.** Schools are reporting significantly increased absenteeism linked to fear and instability among families. In some cases, students have shifted to online learning as a safety measure, which is seriously disrupting learning and student engagement.
- **Economic impacts.** Local businesses are experiencing staffing shortages, limited operating hours and temporary closures. This includes a business the Dakota County Community Development Agency helped open in 2025.
- **Anticipated taxpayer impacts.** We expect increased costs related to child welfare, social services, emergency assistance and project delays when parents, caregivers or members of the local workforce are detained.

A request for coordination and communication

Dakota County respects the role of the federal government in enforcing immigration law. At the same time, the scale, visibility and actions of Operation Metro Surge activity are disrupting local government operations. Communication is lacking between federal agents and local law enforcement. The well-being of residents who depend on county services is strained.

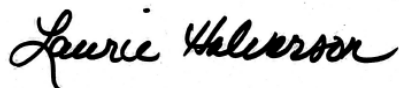
The impacts of federal enforcement and the resulting workforce disruption are occurring at the same time Dakota County is facing new federal mandates that increase costs and place additional pressure on taxpayers.

County Board of Commissioners

We respectfully request improved communication and coordination regarding federal operations in Dakota County so that local governments can maintain public safety, plan appropriately, protect continuity of essential operations and ensure services remain accessible and effective for all residents.

We appreciate your attention to these concerns and welcome the opportunity for further dialogue. Our shared goal is to maintain safe, stable and functioning communities while fulfilling our respective legal responsibilities.

Sincerely,



Laurie Halverson, Chair

Dakota County Board of Commissioners
Dakota County, Minnesota

Cc:

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Senator Tina Smith
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