

Statement of

The Honorable Keith Ellison
Attorney General of the State of Minnesota

before the

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives

March 4, 2026

My name is Keith Ellison, and I have the honor of serving as the Attorney General of Minnesota. I have been invited to testify before this Committee about the work we are doing to hold accountable those who steal from the public. I look forward to discussing the contributions my Office has made to combat fraud in our State.

Fraud is reprehensible, especially when it targets taxpayer funds intended to help the neediest among us. Fraud snatches food off the tables of the hungry and takes shelter from those without it. Like all law-abiding Minnesotans, I have zero tolerance for theft. And as Attorney General, I have done everything within my power to stop it and to punish those who violate our laws.

But we cannot win this fight unless we put aside political differences and work together to serve and protect the public. I hope this hearing can be a step in that direction.

Our Work in Fighting Fraud

Since the moment I was sworn in, my Office has worked tirelessly to hold fraudsters accountable. I am proud of our track record.

First, during my time as Attorney General, we have won 300 Medicaid fraud convictions—more than any state of similar size—and recovered \$80 million in judgments and restitution for Minnesota taxpayers.

Second, we have exercised our civil authority to return tens of millions of dollars to victims of consumer fraud in Minnesota.

Third, the Charities Division of my Office, which has authority to bring civil cases, regularly investigates complaints against charities and non-profit organizations. Since 2019, the Charities Division has resolved over 50 investigations and dissolved 17 sham non-profits involved in federal child nutrition fraud.

Under Minnesota law, my Office has limited jurisdiction over criminal matters. The only kind of criminal case we can prosecute on our own is Medicaid fraud; any other criminal case must be specifically referred to us by county attorneys or the Governor.

We have punched above our weight where we do have criminal jurisdiction. My Office's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit investigates and prosecutes Medicaid provider fraud, as well as cases referred to us by state agencies and managed care organizations involving the abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of vulnerable adults.

I am proud that this Unit has ranked fifth in the nation in fraud convictions over the past six years. Last week, I urged state legislators to pass the bipartisan Medical Assistance Protection Act, which would provide us with additional resources and further improve my Office's ability to investigate and prosecute Medicaid fraud.

When fraud extends beyond the confines of our jurisdiction, my Office has and will continue supporting local and federal prosecutors. When our help is requested, we provide personnel and other support to the 87 county attorneys in Minnesota who have jurisdiction over felony-level state prosecutions, and we welcome their referrals. We also regularly coordinate with federal investigators and prosecutors to combat fraud.

The Fight Against Fraud Should Not Be Politicized

Coordination among enforcers at all levels of government is essential to protecting Minnesotans from bad actors who seek to defraud them. And that is why, if this Committee is committed to combating fraud, it cannot ignore the devastating effects of Operation Metro Surge.

Late last year, Minnesota Republicans partnered with a YouTube content creator to start a viral panic about daycare fraud in our State. On the pretext of

combating fraud, the Trump Administration unleashed over 3,000 masked and armed agents on the streets of Minnesota. As a result:

- Two U.S. citizens, Renee Good and Alex Pretti, were killed by federal agents. Renee Good was a poet and a mother, and Alex Pretti was a nurse who cared for veterans. Federal law enforcement is refusing to cooperate with us in investigating their deaths.
- Minnesota resident Victor Manuel Díaz died in ICE custody at Camp East Montana in Texas. ICE has not explained the circumstances of his death.
- Many other U.S. citizens and legal residents were deprived of their constitutional rights and dignity. One of them was a Hmong elder—and U.S. citizen—taken from his home with no warrant and paraded in the freezing weather in his underwear.
- Young, innocent children were detained and traumatized. People around the world were horrified by the image of federal agents detaining 5-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos in his blue bunny hat.
- Schools and businesses were forced to close, costing countless families their jobs, livelihoods, and education, and costing our State hundreds of millions of dollars in economic damage.

Operation Metro Surge did nothing to address fraud in our State. It decimated our economy, it hurt and scarred our people, and it dealt a severe blow to fraud enforcement efforts in Minnesota.

If the Administration were serious about combating fraud, it would have urged forensic accountants, not masked immigration agents, to Minnesota. It would have supported federal prosecutors and state agencies in investigating and bringing to justice those who defrauded government programs.

Instead, the Administration's actions have had exactly the opposite effect.

Federal prosecutors in Minnesota are still dealing with the rampage caused by Operation Metro Surge. In the U.S. Attorney's Office in Minnesota, six high-ranking attorneys resigned due to the pressure from the Department of Justice to investigate Renee Good's grieving widow. Eight more followed soon after. That number

includes experienced attorneys who have spent years prosecuting fraud and other serious crimes.

The remaining U.S. Attorney's Office staff should be spending their time prosecuting fraudsters and criminals. Instead, they are drowning in the sea of habeas corpus petitions that Operation Metro Surge left in its wake. Because of this misguided operation, the federal government's efforts to fight fraud in Minnesota have suffered a major setback.

There seems to be no end to the Administration's targeting of Minnesota. In January, the President tried to withhold or freeze funding for our State's food stamps and other hunger relief programs, childcare subsidies, and cash and social services support for low-income families. Just a week ago, the Administration announced it is withholding over \$250 million in Medicaid funds from Minnesota—again politicizing fraud to the detriment of our most vulnerable residents.

Fighting Fraud Requires Unified Action

We cannot combat fraud without consistent messaging and support from our political leaders. All sides—Republicans and Democrats, the federal government, and the states—must work together if we are going to win the fight against those who would steal from the public. We need our leaders to unite in that effort, not use it as a tool to score political points.

I encourage this Committee to send a clear message to President Trump to stop using pardons and sentence commutations to let fraudsters off the hook. To protect the public dollar, our chief executive cannot create a culture of permission and tolerance for fraud. I also encourage this Committee to recommend the creation of a national database that will track those who abuse federal benefits programs, so that they cannot apply for the same benefits in another state.

I stand ready and willing to work with the Members of this Committee to advance the cause of holding fraudsters accountable. Now, more than ever, we need coordinated and cooperative engagement across law enforcement if we are to achieve our goals.

I welcome the Committee's questions.