

Despite ICE arrests in Stamford, Lucero assures judicial approval for school immigration raids remains “very low”

Eugene Caibal
Editor-in-chief



STUDENTS BOARD the 3:30 p.m. late bus to the West Side on Tuesday, December 10, 2024. Photo by Scion Estrella ('25)

Editor's note: This is an updated version of an article published on thewestwordonline.com website on January 29.

The likelihood that immigration officials, including ICE agents, will produce a valid judicial warrant that allows them entry into private Stamford Public Schools property is “very low,” district Superintendent Dr. Tamu Lucero said.

Lucero, who spoke on a group call to Stamford Public Schools administrators and students on January 28, repeatedly emphasized the legal guidance she and other district administrators have received from both the State Attorney General, William Tong, and Governor Ned Lamont.

Lucero said the guidance indicates that the likelihood of a federal judge approving a warrant of such a manner is unlikely.

However, she acknowledges that this does little to ease the fears of a community like Westhill, whose English Learner population comprises more than 25 percent of the student body, accord-

ing to Connecticut Department of Education data collected by *The Westword*.

“I wish I could tell you that everything was going to be okay, and I just can’t in this situation,” Lucero said.

According to statements from both Mayor’s Office Press Secretary Lauren Meyers and a joint statement from Stamford Mayor Caroline Simmons, Board of Education President Michael Hyman, and Lucero, U.S. Immigration officials have been active in Stamford since at least the morning of January 28.

Additionally, ICE officials told the Stamford Police Department that they would continue to conduct “surveillance” operations in the city, according to reporting by the Connecticut Mirror in late January. Since then, several arrests have been made by immigration officials.

Though they are not allowed inside school buildings without a valid judicial warrant, immigration officials can station outside school grounds in places such as sidewalks and even lobbies, which are deemed to be public

areas according to the National Immigration Law Center, though this does not give them the authority to stop or detain any individual without probable cause.

Despite this, Lucero told the group that she and her legal counsel contest the notion that lobbies, especially those in schools, are public areas, and will defend their stance should it be tested by immigration officials.

The fears surrounding immigration stoked by the current Trump administration has left the community on edge. According to Lucero and other sources familiar with the matter, there has been a drop in attendance among sheltered and English Language Learner populations across both Westhill and Stamford High.

For students who do not show up in fear of immigration raids on school grounds, Lucero assured the group that training will be had with the attendance committees at all three high schools, who review absences on an individual student basis, regarding policy changes catered to these students who refuse to attend out of fear for

their own safety.

In the event that federal immigration officials do produce a valid warrant signed by a federal judge allowing them inside school property, city officials said they cannot intervene.

“Our [state] Attorney General, William Tong, is working really hard to make sure we are able to keep these activities out of our school buildings and off of our campuses,” Lucero said. “But we also know that there are certain legal rules that need to be followed.”

Lucero said only when a Stamford Public Schools Compliance officer arrives on site and personally assures the validity and scope of the warrant, which specifically outlines the areas that officials are allowed to operate in, can immigration officials be allowed inside.

“As an adult who runs the school system,” Lucero said to the group that she has a “scary feeling” about the incoming climate of immigration brought by the new presidential administration, but she hopes that the community building brought forth by these fears will

ultimately strengthen the collective Stamford community and mitigate any potential harm.

Across the district, in both Westhill and Stamford High, local organizations such as Building One and the Mayor’s Youth Leadership Council are providing guidance to students and their families regarding the civil liberties they are entitled to, as well as how to communicate with ICE officials should they arrive on an undocumented community member’s property.

“We are committed to ensuring that our schools remain safe spaces for all students, and we appreciate your continued support,” Mayor Simmons said in her statement Tuesday.

“Stamford Public Schools is committed to providing all children with an education that cultivates productive habits of mind, body and heart, and our goal is to do so in a warm and welcoming environment where every child is seen, heard, and valued.”