



5 February 2026

Dear President Rothman, UW System Chancellors, and UW System Board of Regents:

In light of ICE's violent occupation of Minneapolis, AFT-Wisconsin calls upon you to develop a plan for protecting the legal rights and physical safety of UW employees and students in the event of ICE raids on our campuses.

Over the past year, we've watched ICE violate constitutional prohibitions against illegal search and seizure. We've watched them deny people due process. We've watched terrified children being kidnapped from their schools, elderly people being dragged half-naked from their homes, and people on their way to work being pulled from their vehicles. We've watched as nonviolent protesters and bystanders are assaulted and summarily executed.

Under normal circumstances, UW System's guidance to ask ICE agents for judicial warrants, direct them to waiting areas, and call UW General Counsel would be adequate. Yet as events in Minneapolis have made abundantly clear, circumstances are no longer normal. ICE is emboldened by promises of federal immunity and shows no compunction about acting outside of the law. Something as simple as asking for a warrant is now grounds for being brutalized, detained, and disappeared.

We call upon every UW campus to treat ICE presence at our universities as the safety threat it so clearly is. We need campus-wide alerts, plans to evacuate or shelter in place, and plans for mobilizing university law enforcement effectively to ensure the rights of employees and students. We need plans for transitioning to remote work and classes in the event of ongoing ICE occupation. We need emergency housing and meal plans for students if a long-term evacuation is necessary.

We call upon the UW System to provide legal representation for all employees and students unlawfully detained or deported by immigration officials. We further call upon the UW System to guarantee student and employee rights to free speech. We must refuse to penalize those who peacefully protest ICE's actions. We must also refuse to provide federal immigration agencies with the personal information of those who engage in protest, as doing so puts the lives of those individuals and their families in grave danger.

As a public university system, we have an obligation to uphold the ideals of American democracy—even and especially in the face of violently anti-democratic forces. We need a plan for that defense, and we need it now.

Sincerely,

Jon Shelton, President, AFT-Wisconsin

Neil Kraus, VP of Higher Education, AFT-Wisconsin

Barret Elward, Co-President - United Faculty and Academic Staff - AFT Local 223

Amy Lewis, Co-President-United Faculty and Academic Staff - AFT Local 223

Executive Board of the Teaching Assistants' Association - AFT-Wisconsin Local 3220

Executive Board, UW-Whitewater United - AFT Local 6510

Lauren Gantz, Co-President, Stevens Point Academic Representation Council - AFT Local 6505

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AFT-Wisconsin is a labor union comprised of over 500 different public job classifications, including the Pre-K12 school system, the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), numerous state agencies, and the University of Wisconsin system.

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