

Letters: The ICE raids have taken a toll on our residents, our businesses and our kids

Restaurants closing to protect employees from raids. Clothing stores, laundromats and auto repair shops seeing their customers melt away in an atmosphere of growing fear.

For weeks, federal immigration agents' incursion into Chicago-area neighborhoods has had a chilling effect on local commerce. Now, agents' activity has resulted in another shocking way to destabilize our workforce and threaten communities' well-being. The Nov. 7 editorial summed things up well: ["Immigration enforcement' and 'day care center' do not belong in the same headline."](#)

In a well-publicized incident last week, armed and masked federal agents pulled a day care teacher from Chicago's Rayito del Sol Early Learning Center as young children, parents and her co-workers looked on amid the horror and chaos. This preschool serves children from infancy to age 6. Can anyone believe such traumatizing events are good for kids, for their education or for business?

As seen in research on adverse childhood experiences, known as ACEs, exposure to violence and trauma can work against kids' development in long-lasting ways, increasing the potential for physical and mental health challenges as they work through school and into employment.

Studies further show the birth-to-5-years period to be one of maximum brain development, and early education can help immensely in seeding skills that are critical to kids' later success — first, in school and then, in jobs. Disrupting children's early learning means undermining the very beginning of their path toward optimal cognitive, emotional and physical progress, toward academic and professional achievement.

Such disruptions also reverberate in today's workforce of parents who rely on stable child care to find and maintain their jobs. Child care is the workforce behind our entire workforce. That's reflected in the findings of [a recent poll](#) of 400 Illinois employers and managers conducted by the nonprofit ReadyNation Illinois network of business leaders, to which we belong.

Among other results, [86% of business executives](#) called high-quality child care and early education important for "laying an early skills foundation for young children's success," and 89% said early childhood programs make local communities "desirable for businesses and employees."

Employers and managers know the far-reaching value of preserving safe, stable child care and preschool spaces for children. As the editorial states, "Immigration enforcement operations should not be taking place in and around a day care center serving little kids."

— *Ian Tobin, vice president and director of community development, Lincoln Square Ravenswood Chamber of Commerce, and Sarah Wilson, executive director, Uptown Chamber of Commerce*

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