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A common rhetoric I am seeing about immigration enforcement is “if you are legal, you have nothing to worry about.” As a teacher at Lewiston High School, I can assure you that this is not true. My students—children—are scared. They’re scared to go to school, they’re scared to go to work. These students are joyful, resilient, hard-workers. They are also intensely kind and empathetic. It is a daily occurrence to see students from different countries who speak different home languages helping each other working together. Students who have been in my classroom four months help those who have been in my classroom a week. They work to learn together despite their differences in a way I wish more people would learn from.

Recently, my students have been quiet. Subdued. Or absent. Not because they don’t want to be here. Not because they have done anything wrong. Because they are scared of being profiled by their skin color and dress. We are hearing that the purpose of immigration enforcement is to make our streets safer—to detain violent criminals, but my students are scared. They have sought asylum after seeing things that children should not have to see, and this was supposed to be their safety. Instead, a 14-year-old student told me the other day that her mom had to have a conversation with her about how people will not consider her an American because of the color of her skin and her accent—that it might put a target on her back.

Schools are supposed to be safe, but parents are keeping their children home in fear. Homes are supposed to be safe but doors are being broken down. Passing this bill will help ensure that our fourth amendment rights have more strength. It will help children learn so they can become our next generation of doctors, leaders, electricians, carpenters. Hopefully at some point it will help a 14-year-old girl whose family has done everything “right” feel like she can be an American even with an accent and dark skin.