

NEWS

A Lynn teen pushed her brother during a fight. Then ICE took her

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Lynn District Court on Washington Street in Lynn. Charlie McKenna/MassLive

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A Lynn teenager sits in a jailhouse on Wednesday with her future in the U.S. in doubt after federal immigration authorities apprehended her at a Massachusetts courthouse where she faced a single misdemeanor charge.

Her charge: pushing her brother during an argument over a cell phone.

Zeneyda Barrera, 18, originally from Nicaragua, was arrested by Lynn police after a neighbor complained about a noise disturbance around 4:30 a.m. on Monday. After speaking with Barrera, her mother and her 12-year-old brother, police learned Barrera pushed her brother to the floor during an argument over a cell phone, according to Barrera's attorney, Patrick Callahan.

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"The allegation is that she pushed him to the floor," Callahan said. "That was the extent of the allegation," he said, noting that there were no injuries to the 12-year-old "whatsoever."

Hours after the incident, however, officials with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) apprehended Barrera before her arraignment at Lynn District Court, Callahan said. Court records show Barrera was charged with one count of assault and battery, a misdemeanor.

"This was a minor, minor case," Callahan said. "Things that happen with any household that have children in their preteen to teens."

"It threw me for a loop when they (ICE) placed her into custody," Callahan said since Barrera's mother told him that her daughter has legal status in the United States. "It's unusual for (ICE) to pick up an individual with legal status and not convicted of a crime. That usually doesn't happen."

Especially since the Essex County District Attorney had agreed to divert Barrera's case to a young adult diversion program, which could have led to the charge being dismissed, according to Callahan.

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After being detained by ICE, she was brought to a jail in Cumberland County, Maine, the attorney said.

ICE did not immediately return a request for comment on Wednesday.

Lynn Mayor Jared Nicholson expressed concern about how Barrera was separated from her family and is at risk of being deported into an "impossible situation."

"Her mother is desperately trying to understand what is happening," the mayor said in a statement to MassLive.

"We have been told that ICE would be targeting violent offenders whose presence puts our community at risk," Nicholson said. "Based on what we have learned so far, that is not what is happening in this case. The facts here show that in order to genuinely partner with communities on public safety, ICE needs to take all the circumstances into account."

Nicholson added that he's concerned that cases such as Barrera's could create a "potential chilling effect" surrounding policing by

the Lynn Police Department if people are afraid of the implications of contacting law enforcement.

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He clarified that the Lynn Police Department does not ask for immigration status.

ICE detained Barrera moments after a Lynn judge ordered her released. She was waiting to speak with the district attorney's office about the diversion program and in the court's lock-up area when ICE apprehended her, Callahan said.

Immigration authorities ramped up deportation efforts once President Donald Trump took office last week.

ICE said it made 956 arrests nationwide on Sunday and 286 on Saturday, the Associated Press [reported](#). While some of the operations may not have been unusual, ICE averaged 311 daily arrests in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30.

Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey's office referred a request for comment to local law enforcement.

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