

Rank-and-file candidate for UAW president defends Ann Arbor nurse being prosecuted by Trump for protecting patient against Border Patrol

Our reporters
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Will Lehman, the Mack Trucks worker and socialist running for president of the United Auto Workers, has issued a statement and released a video demanding the dropping of all charges against Chloe Freeman, the former registered nurse at Trinity Health Ann Arbor Hospital who is being prosecuted by the Trump administration for protecting an injured immigrant worker from Border Patrol agents. Lehman's statement, posted to his campaign account on X, calls on "every member of the UAW and all workers and young people" to rally to Freeman's defense.

Freeman, 33, faces a federal criminal complaint for "instigating or assisting escape," filed August 28 in the US District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. If convicted, she faces up to a year in federal prison. A preliminary examination is scheduled for October 20.

According to the criminal complaint, on the night of May 28, 2026, Border Patrol agents conducted a "targeted immigration enforcement operation" in Ann Arbor against a Mexican worker identified only by the initials "OBP." As the man fled, he tripped over a curb, fell, and struck his face on the pavement, suffering a laceration to the bridge of his nose and a contusion on his forehead. Immigration agents took the bleeding man into custody and transported him to Trinity Health Ann Arbor Hospital for a CT scan. There, at approximately 11:30 p.m., Freeman allegedly entered the CT room, removed the man's IV, and escorted him out through the ambulance bay doors. Security footage shows him leaving the hospital shortly after. He has not been located since.

Freeman admitted to her actions during a June 18

interview with Trinity Health investigators, stating that she was unaware the man was in custody at the time, as no agents were with him in the CT room. She told investigators that she "did not agree with ICE separating people from their families" and that she knew she "was going to set him free."

In his statement, Lehman describes the prosecution as a political vendetta. "Its purpose is to warn every nurse, doctor, teacher and worker that anyone who defends immigrants will be treated like a criminal."

Lehman places the case within the broader assault on immigrant workers under Trump. "The prosecution of Chloe Freeman is one front in the largest assault on immigrant workers in American history. Hundreds of thousands of people have been detained and deported since Trump took office again. ICE arrested around 51,000 people in July alone."

Congress, Lehman states, has committed nearly \$250 billion to ICE and the Border Patrol through the end of Trump's term, "including \$45 billion just for a nationwide network of detention camps, where men, women and children are held without charges." The administration has invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to ship immigrants to foreign prisons, including the CECOT camp in El Salvador, without a hearing, and has "openly threatened to suspend habeas corpus, the basic right to challenge imprisonment before a judge."

The statement contrasts Freeman's treatment with the impunity of the state's own killers. "At the same time, not a single government agent has been charged for the killings of Renée Nicole Good, a mother of three, or

Alex Pretti, a VA nurse and union member, in Minneapolis.” Lehman cites the murder of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, a construction worker shot dead in his work van in Houston, and the killing of Joan Sebastián Guerrero in Maine, where “agents fired into the car” of a young Colombian worker with a valid work permit “and handcuffed him while he bled to death in front of his wife and daughter.” Fifty-two immigrants have died in ICE custody in the first 500 days of the Trump administration.

Lehman connects the case to the transformation of healthcare into an arm of the deportation machine. “One of Trump’s first acts was to scrap the rules keeping ICE agents out of hospitals, and now healthcare workers are routinely forced to choose between caring for their patients and serving the deportation machine. The case against Chloe Freeman comes from the same playbook: punish anyone who stands with immigrants, so that everyone else is intimidated.”

The statement notes these policies are generating popular resistance. “The killings of Renée Good and Alex Pretti brought 100,000 people into the streets of Minneapolis and set off protests and high school walkouts across the country. In city after city, neighbors have turned out to confront ICE raids and protect one another.” Thousands have rallied to Freeman’s defense, and a fundraiser for her has raised more than \$30,000. “This shows the growing opposition among working people to the raids, the detention camps and the killings carried out by ICE and the Trump administration. An attack on immigrants is an attack on all of us.”

Lehman warns that the methods used against immigrants today are being prepared for the working class as a whole. “The same police-state methods being used against immigrants today, and against those who help them, are being prepared for any worker who strikes, protests or speaks out against war and dictatorship.”

The statement declares, “The political establishment will not defend Chloe Freeman. The Democrats voted to continue Congressional funding for the ICE gulag and in Minnesota helped smother the mass movement allowing Trump to redeploy his thugs to other cities.” Nor can workers rely on the union bureaucracies, Lehman says, “which sabotaged the movement for a

general strike in Minneapolis and have done nothing to oppose the round up of our immigrant brothers and sisters.”

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has documented, no prominent Democratic politician—including “progressives” such as Bernie Sanders, Rashida Tlaib and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez—has made a public statement on Freeman’s case, and no labor union has issued a statement of support. The Democratic Party helped construct and fund the deportation machine, and the union apparatuses, integrated into the state and the corporations, function to contain and demobilize the opposition that Freeman’s stand has inspired.

Lehman’s statement concludes with a call for the independent mobilization of the working class: “I call on UAW members and workers everywhere to come to Chloe Freeman’s defense. Healthcare workers at Trinity Health and hospitals everywhere should form rank-and-file committees to protect their patients and coworkers from ICE. Autoworkers, nurses and all workers must unite across every workplace to defend all immigrants and stop the deportations and ICE raids. Defend Chloe Freeman. Drop the charges now!”

Workers can contribute to Freeman’s defense fund [here](#).



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