

Faith leaders across Massachusetts urge Governor Healey to take clear stand against immigration enforcement

By [Aayushi Datta](#) Globe Correspondent, Updated January 23, 2026, 6:37 p.m.



Pastor Manny Daphnis sang during a gathering by faith leaders at the State House in call for Governor Maura Healey to take a more aggressive approach to protecting immigrants. ANDREW BURKE-STEVENSON/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

What began as a quiet vigil inside a downtown cathedral ended at the State House on Friday, where more than 175 faith leaders across Massachusetts called on Governor Maura Healey to take a stand against potential federal immigration enforcement.

The religious leaders at Massachusetts Communities Action Network, the organizers of the event, said they decided to push Healey to take a more aggressive approach to protecting immigrants after a federal immigration agent shot and killed [Renee Nicole Good](#), US citizen and a [37-year-old mother of three](#), earlier this month. They said they were afraid similar actions could occur in Massachusetts.

The gathering began at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul on Tremont Street, where clergy representing Jewish, Christian, and other faith traditions assembled for a vigil for Good. Many wore visible religious symbols like stoles, prayer shawls, crosses, and kippahs. They watched a livestreamed prayer by ISAIAH, a Minnesota-based community organizing group and MCAN's sister network, with sorrowful eyes.

"Just like all Americans, my attention, my heart, has been in Minneapolis for the last couple of weeks," said Rabbi Greg Hersh, founding Rabbi of V'ahavatah, a Judaism beyond Zionism synagogue in Cambridge, after the vigil. "I believe firmly that none of us are free until all of us free. None of us are safe, until all of us are safe."

Good's death and federal immigration agents' [actions in Minnesota](#) have sparked a national outcry in recent weeks, including among faith leaders. Police [arrested about 100 clergy](#) demonstrating against immigration enforcement at Minnesota's largest airport Friday, organizers estimated, as thousands gathered, despite [Arctic temperatures](#), in downtown Minneapolis to protest the Trump administration's crackdown. Religious leaders across the country [have previously spoken out against](#) ICE raids.

The faith leaders in Boston on Friday wanted Healey to accept their three demands: use her executive powers to protect civil rights, restrict the use of state land for federal immigration enforcement, and establish accountability toward federal actions if they violate constitutional rights.



Two attendees prayed during a public action by faith leaders at the State House in response to growing federal threats to immigrant communities and other protected residents in the Commonwealth. ANDREW BURKE-STEVENSON/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Following the vigil, the clergy mingled throughout the cathedral hall, reflecting on a prompt displayed on large screens asking how the current political moment had challenged or deepened their faith and what practices they felt called to sustain. With hands on their colleagues' shoulders, and eyes closed, the clergy all prayed and blessed each other.

"People are fearful and worried about where our society and where our faithful people are headed," said the Rev. Jeremy Froyen, rector of Grace Church in New Bedford, at the gathering. "But yet, I'm also hearing a lot of joy, not in the sense of being happy with what's going on, but joy knowing that we're all together and we're standing in solidarity."

By late morning, the Rev. Aaron Payson led the crowd to the State House from the cathedral. People walked in tiny groups through the Commons while discussing the state

of the country, possible actions Massachusetts can take, and learning more about other faiths through their leaders.

The Rev. Mariama White-Hammond, pastor of New Roots African Methodist Episcopal Church in Dorchester and core member of MCAN, sang prayer songs on the way along with her other colleagues. She said the gathering had three motives: to stand with the clergy in Minneapolis and all the people in Minnesota, to begin organizing and preparing in case similar things start happening in Massachusetts, and lastly, to get Healey to take action by agreeing to their three demands.

“Part of the point of this is to connect faith communities together so that we are more able to respond both as citizens, but also as people of faith who have a heightened responsibility to care for one another,” she said.

The clergy all gathered at Memorial Hall inside the State House as speakers from multiple faith communities addressed the crowd. The speakers repeatedly urged the Healey administration to take a clear public stand against the use of state resources for federal immigration enforcement.

Demonstrators greeted those around them with “peace be with you,” during public action by faith leaders in Memorial Hall at the State House in response to growing federal threats to immigrant communities and other protected residents in the Commonwealth. ANDREW BURKE-STEVENSON/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

William Dickerson II, the co-executive director of MCAN and part of the faith tradition Bwete, said the action was intended to demonstrate the collective power of faith communities and push for concrete outcomes.

“We want to make sure that our governor and our public officials are being really mindful of the fact that these kinds of things could happen here,” he said. “See them showing us

how they're going to protect us through public action."

The Rev. Katie Omberg, an area conference minister in the United Church of Christ, emphasized that the gathering was not partisan, but moral.

"What's the role of clergy in this? What is our call to do here? Today is answering part of that, which is being brave enough to stand up and call evil, evil," they said.

Throughout the event, speakers returned to themes of resistance, courage, and unity across traditions.

Sister of Saint Joseph Melinda Pellerin was tasked to speak with the governor regarding MCAN's demands.

Faith leaders said they hope the gathering marks the beginning of a broader movement across the Commonwealth.

"I hope this is the beginning of a resistance here in Boston," Hersh said. "Coming together as a wholly religious people and uniting over our shared values to make really important changes so that we can all be safer."

Materials from the Associated Press were used in this report.

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