

## **Jane Makela, Esq.**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary.

My name is Jane Makela, and I live in the town of Falmouth. I am moved to add my voice to those opposing passage of this bill based both on my Unitarian Universalist faith and my experience as a pro bono asylum lawyer. (Indeed, I hope eventually to be providing testimony for the same reasons in support of LD 1259, *prohibiting* the federal immigration enforcement agreements the present bill, LD 1656, makes virtually mandatory.)

Like many other faith traditions, mine calls me to work for a diverse multicultural beloved community where all feel welcome and can thrive, and where every person is recognized and treated as inherently worthy, having the right to flourish with dignity, love, and compassion, wherever their origin and whatever their immigration status.

This bill flies in the face of those values, seemingly based on the belief that having foreign-born non-citizens within our borders poses such grave dangers to the rest of us that we can't risk one or more of our local law enforcement agencies having even an "informal", "unwritten" "practice" of declining to jump on the federal mass deportation bandwagon. That notion is morally abhorrent and entirely without factual support.

As a lawyer, I commend to you the several analyses offered by other opponents of this bill enumerating the multiple Constitutional challenges this bill raises (with attendant liability potential for the local entities trying to bushwhack their way through the thicket of constantly changing federal immigration edicts). I can add nothing of value to those compelling arguments.

But my own volunteer work helping New Mainers make a new start here, much of that work in the form of pro bono legal assistance, further reinforces my opposition to this bill. I know the experience many of these immigrants have had with the police in their home countries and how critically important it is that they have a better one here.

In many of my asylum clients' countries of origin, police are under direct control and do the bidding of repressive and corrupt government regimes, taking part in torture and extrajudicial killings of detainees, arbitrary arrests, and the disappearance of those perceived to have opposed the government, all with apparent impunity. For these immigrants, an unbiased criminal justice system and police focused on public safety are concepts they must slowly come to trust when they get here.

I have enormous respect and gratitude for the local law enforcement agencies and officers in the State of Maine, but particularly for those who have responded to the

## 2 | TYPE THE DOCUMENT TITLE

fears of New Mainers in their communities with reassurance that local police would *not* be knocking on their doors or stopping them on the street to serve ICE detainers and making clear the difference between ICE responsibilities and those of the town police department. That's how trust is built.

For the inherent worth and dignity of all who live here in Maine, I urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1656.

Thank you.