

Testimony in Opposition to LD 1656, “An Act to Facilitate Compliance with Federal Immigration Law by State and Local Government Entities”**James Myall, Senior Policy Analyst**

April 29, 2025

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is James Myall and I am a Senior Policy Analyst at the Maine Center for Economic Policy. I am writing in opposition to LD 1656, “An Act to Facilitate Compliance with Federal Immigration Law by State and Local Government Entities.” MECEP believes LD 1656 distracts local law enforcement officers from their core responsibilities, encourages racial profiling, and ultimately makes communities less safe by eroding the trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

In requiring local governments and law enforcement agencies to work with federal Immigration and Custom Enforcement and Customs and Border Patrol officers, LD 1656 would divert local resources to federal priorities. Personnel and property that is funded by state and local taxpayers will be subject to the priorities of federal officials who are unaccountable to those same local taxpayers. In the case of law enforcement officers, it will mean their attention is taken away from keeping Mainers safe and instead towards enforcing federal immigration law. Research conclusively shows that undocumented immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans,¹ and studies show that partnerships with federal agents do not reduce crime in local communities.²

What’s more, this bill risks encouraging racial profiling among state and local government officials, including law enforcement officers. Despite the bill’s language to protect the civil rights of Mainers, studies of similar partnerships with ICE have shown that they lead to increased racial profiling, particularly of Latinos, by local police.³

It’s also important to acknowledge that this is a particularly frightening environment for immigrants and even Americans from immigrant backgrounds. The fear is not limited to undocumented immigrants. Recent high-profile cases have resulted in detention of tourists,⁴ students,⁵ green-card holders⁶ and even naturalized citizens.⁷ The federal government has even ended its policy of not targeting sensitive areas such as schools, opening up the possibility that the bill would require teachers to facilitate ICE raids on schools in Maine. In this environment, requiring local cooperation with federal immigration agents will make thousands of Mainers afraid to even access basic services for fear of being interrogated or detained.

More broadly, we know that mass deportations are not only inhumane but economically counter-productive,⁸ and Maine agencies should not facilitate them. Beyond the direct costs of arresting and detaining people, deportations deplete local economies. Research into the Secure Communities program, a 2008-13 initiative which saw local police assist in immigration enforcement, has found that communities which saw more deportations saw lower employment and wages for US-born individuals,⁹ as workers and spending were taken

out of the local economy. Because a significant portion of the construction sector relies on undocumented workers, these partnerships also increased the cost of housing.¹⁰

LD 1656 would require local communities in Maine to be party to inhumane, expensive and counter-productive partnerships with federal immigration officials that would engender fear among our friends and neighbors, accrue extra costs to taxpayers, and ultimately weaken our state's economy. I urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on the legislation.

Please reach out to me at jmyall@mecep.org with any questions. Thank you.

Notes

¹ Michelangelo Landgrave and Alex Nowrasteh, "Illegal Immigrant Incarceration Rates, 2010–2023." *Cato Institute*. Policy Analysis No 994, April 24, 2025. <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/illegal-immigrant-incarceration-rates-2010-2023>

² Alex Forrester and Alex Nowrasteh, "Do Immigration Enforcement Programs Reduce Crime?" *The Center for Growth and Opportunity*. March 25, 2020. <https://www.thecgo.org/research/do-immigration-enforcement-programs-reduce-crime/>

³ Huyen Pham and Pham Hoang Van, "Sheriffs, State T Sheriffs, State Troopers, and the Effects of Immigration Policing." 64 *Ariz. L. Rev.* 463 (2022). <https://scholarship.law.tamu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2541&context=facscholar>

⁴ Trevor Hughes and Lauren Villagram, "Tourists detained by ICE say they were treated like 'the worst criminal'" *USA Today* April 15, 2025. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2025/04/12/ice-tourist-detention-border-trump-immigration/82740260007/>

⁵ Kathy McCormack and Michael Casey, "Turkish student detained by ICE moved to Vermont before judge's order, government says" *Associated Press* April 2, 2025.

<https://apnews.com/article/rumeysa-ozturk-deportation-tufts-massachusetts-student-1dd330bef8fb44b05f9818c0020728a0>

⁶ Amanda Swinhart, "Palestinian student remains detained in Vermont with a hearing set for next week," *Associated Press* April 23, 2025 <https://apnews.com/article/mohsen-mahdawi-columbia-student-detained-ice-vermont-2078326229e424b722e837595a03a042>

⁷ Jeff Winter, "US citizen says he and his wife detained without explanation after returning from Canada." *Associated Press* April 18, 2025. <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/04/18/us/us-citizen-detained-canada/index.html>

⁸ James Myall, "7 things to know about immigration in Maine and the United States," *Maine Center for Economic Policy* Oct 29, 2024. <https://www.mecep.org/blog/7-things-to-know-about-immigration-in-maine-and-the-united-states/>

⁹ Chloe East et al., "The Labor Market Effects of Immigration Enforcement." April 19, 2022. https://www.chloeeast.com/uploads/8/9/9/7/8997263/ehlmv_draft.pdf

¹⁰ Troup Howard, Mengqi Wang, and Dayin Zhang, "Cracking Down, Pricing Up: Housing Supply in the Wake of Mass Deportation." *Social Scholars Research Network*, Feb 16, 2024.

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4729511