

Testimony in Opposition to LD 1329, “An Act to Identify United States Citizenship Status on Driver's Licenses and Nondriver Identification Cards”**James Myall, Senior Policy Analyst**

April 30, 2025

Good Afternoon, Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. My name is James Myall, and I am a Senior Policy Analyst at the Maine Center for Economic Policy. I’m testifying today in opposition to LD 1329, “An Act to Identify United States Citizenship Status on Driver's Licenses and Nondriver Identification Cards.” MECEP opposes LD 1329 because we believe it will add unnecessary information to state driver’s licenses which risks discrimination, increasing fear among New Mainer communities, and ultimately harming our economy.

Driver’s licenses are proof of your ability to drive. They are not immigration documents and they should not be made into immigration documents by this bill. Mainers have other ways of proving their immigration status through birth certificates, passports, and other documents issued by the federal government. We are concerned that adding immigration status to a driver’s license will unnecessarily impact a driver’s interactions with law enforcement agencies and other government entities.

Research shows that law enforcement officers can be prone to unfair treatment against immigrants or people they perceive as immigrants. We believe that even if an officer pulls someone over for an unrelated traffic offense, knowing the driver’s immigration status could lead to harsher treatment for noncitizens. There are already documented examples of “citizenship profiling” among US police departments.ⁱ It also increases the likelihood that an officer will involve Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), even though a Maine driver’s license cannot be obtained without lawful immigration status. There are similar risks for other government officials - would a general assistance officer view an application differently if an applicant presented a noncitizen driver’s license as part of the application? We know that fear of police interactions leads to lower use of vital public benefits for some immigrants.ⁱⁱ

Finally, we are concerned that such a requirement will add to the existing atmosphere of fear among New Mainers. With several high profile incidents of people with lawful immigration status and even US citizenship being questioned, detained and deported by ICE, we believe that the requirement in this bill would lead some Mainers to forgo getting a drivers license or leaving the state entirely. Immigrants contribute to Maines economy by paying taxes, working in critical industries and starting businesses. We should be

welcoming them and helping them maximize their contributions - not putting a target on their backs.

I urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1329. Thank you and I'm happy to take any questions.

Notes

ⁱ Maria Morales, Denise Delgado and Theodore Curry, "Variations in Citizenship Profiling by Generational Status: Individual and Neighborhood Characteristics of Latina/os Questioned by Law Enforcement About Their Legal Status." *Race and Social Problems* 10(1), July 2018. [10.1007/s12552-018-9235-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-018-9235-3)

ⁱⁱ Lei Chen et al., "Immigrants' Enforcement Experiences and Concern about Accessing Public Benefits or Services." *J Immigr Minor Health*. 2023 Mar 1;25(5):1077–1084. doi: [10.1007/s10903-023-01460-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-023-01460-x)