

Marvin Ellison
Portland
LD 1259

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Rev. Marvin Ellison, Ph.D., and I'm a resident of Portland. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony.

I am writing in support of LD 1259 and LD 1971.

As an ordained Presbyterian minister, my career has largely been in academia. For over 35 years I taught Christian ethics on the faculty of Bangor Theological Seminary and have helped trained faith leaders to serve congregations throughout Maine, including chaplains for local police forces and for the Maine State Police. Because of them, and because I have also served on the Board of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence, I have come to appreciate the invaluable role that law enforcement officers play in maintaining civil order and protecting community members on a daily basis.

It is my strong conviction that local and state law enforcement officials should not engage in immigration enforcement or function as pseudo-ICE agents. That's not their appropriate role, and asking them to engage in that capacity distracts them from their legitimate mission.

The proposed legislation will clarify the proper role of local and state law enforcement officials. Even more importantly, these bills together will provide needed assurances that Maine police will not be coopted into supporting the Trump administration's efforts to deport people who reside here legally, do not have criminal records, and pose no threat to public safety.

As a clergyperson and Christian ethicist, I stand firmly within the Christian tradition that welcomes and honors "the stranger in our midst," the immigrant and the refugee, the asylum seeker and the sojourner, those seeking protection and a fair opportunity to begin life anew in Maine. I'm deeply troubled by the anti-immigrant policies of the Trump administration, especially its flagrant disregard of the right to due process and equal protection to everyone in the U.S., regardless of immigration status, guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

The immigrants among us are our friends, neighbors, co-workers, family members, and, yes, congregants. They are an asset to us and to the State of Maine, not a danger or liability. I urge you to support these bills to protect their rights and to prevent the corrupt use of our law enforcement officials by those who are seeking to carry out a mass deportation agenda.

Rather than deporting them, we should be welcoming immigrants and refugees and, by so doing, strengthening our communities and State.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit this testimony and for your service to the people of Maine, including our citizens and our immigrant residents alike.