

Nancy B Chandler
Topsham
LD 1971

Testimony to Judiciary Committee on LD1971 Protect Workers By Clarifying the Relationship of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies with Federal Immigration Authorities

by Representative Deqa Dhalac

Dear Chairpersons Senator Anne Carney and Representative Amy D. Kuhn,

I am Nancy B Chandler from Topsham, Maine. I am testifying in favor of LD1971.

The many Somali immigrants I have worked with as an English instructor and farm business advisor in Lewiston have been hardworking, forgiving, community oriented people, eager to provide for their children and learn new ways to grow American vegetables for sale. They have endured years of war, killing of family members, and overcrowded refugee centers. Their children built a winning soccer team in Lewiston and many attend top American universities. The immigrants I have driven to doctors appointments and English classes in Topsham are smart, innovative, adaptable people. All adults are eager to work, contribute to the community and add to the American economy through income, social security, and sales taxes plus their essential work. The intelligence, creativity, energy and hard work of these immigrants have filled farm and sales jobs established Americans are unwilling to do.

LD 1971 prohibits state or local law enforcement agencies and officers from assisting immigration enforcement activities, allowing Department of Homeland Security access to inmates, or detaining immigrants. A Maine law enforcement agency must release persons held only for immigration status as soon as possible and less than 48 hours. Maine law enforcement agencies must inform a held immigrant of his rights before an interview with an immigration authority, and if it intends to comply with a hold request. These restrictions are necessary to protect the equal human rights immigrants have with American citizens. These rights include due process of law, legal representation, and prevention from arrest without a valid reason, and protection against unreasonable search and seizure.

LD1971 specifies the scope of participation of a local law enforcement agency in a joint law enforcement task force. This bill allows local and state law officers to participate in law enforcement only if suspecting criminal activity, not based solely on a person's immigration status. Maine city, town and state police should not be involved in immigration proceedings since they have enough to do maintaining law and order in our communities. Our towns cannot afford, and don't have responsibility to participate in immigration proceedings. Local police are not trained in immigration laws, rules and proceedings, so they would be likely to hurt the human rights of immigrants, with a high risk of racial profiling, illegal arrest and detention. Like all Americans, immigrants have rights of due process, and legal representation. Immigrants may not be arrested without a valid reason, or have unreasonable search and seizure.

There is no emergency of immigration surges into the U.S. that needs local and state police forces to help manage. America is a country based on the strength, diversity and energy of immigrants from many cultures over our long history. With the low birth rate of American women, our population is growing only due to immigration. Employers will continue to need the smart, adaptable, hardworking attitudes of immigrants to learn and apply needed trades and services and fill empty jobs. Please send LD1971 to the full legislature for a vote.