

Nancy B Chandler  
Topsham  
LD 1259

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am Nancy B Chandler, retired farmer and farm educator. I am submitting testimony in support of LD1259.

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 farms and sales jobs established Americans are unwilling to do.

LD 1259 prohibits state or local law enforcement agencies and officers from contracts with federal immigration enforcement authorities. 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. 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.

Towns that sign 287(g) agreements with federal immigration authorities would be responsible for the costs of that work, both in staffing, jail operation and administrative work. Maine police forces have greatly increased their work load in recent years, and do not have the staff to take on federal immigration responsibilities.

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 vote for LD1259 to send it to the full legislature for a vote.