

Hannah Brehaut  
Waldoboro  
LD 1259

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Hannah Brehaut, I live in Waldoboro, and I am here to testify in favor of LD 1259.

I came to this country on a work visa. I fell in love, married a Mainer, and built a life here. I overstayed my visa not carelessly, but intentionally, because I knew I qualified for a waiver when I applied for my green card. I followed the law, followed the process, and followed every rule.

When I applied for my green card, I received a work permit. That permit expired before my green card was approved. I couldn't leave the country, not because I had done anything wrong, but because I feared detainment. Even though I was here legally, I lived in fear and uncertainty.

My green card took two years to arrive. Then, due to the backlog, it expired before I was able to renew it. I traveled to visit family in England with that expired card, a letter from the government stating my status was still valid, and then a second letter when the first expired. Despite having full legal standing and documentation, I was detained by ICE twice, treated like a criminal.

All of this, from my work visa to my green card and ultimately to citizenship, has cost over \$10,000. It has required an extraordinary level of patience, resilience, and a thorough understanding of the English language, both written and spoken. This process is not for the careless. It demands your full life—your time, your money, and your emotional energy. And I gave it all.

I am a business owner. I have paid taxes from day one. I own property. I am raising two American-born children. I am married to an American citizen. I have invested in this country with everything I have. I did everything right. And every time I was detained, due process confirmed that truth.

I cannot imagine what it would feel like today, as a mother, a wife, and a business owner, to try to visit my family abroad, or just be driving down the street only to be taken away from my home, my babies, my livelihood, and the partner I love. Yet that is a real possibility when the state I live in chooses to partner with an agency that has repeatedly shown its willingness to ignore the Constitution.

This process has already taken a toll on me. But what would truly break me is knowing that doing everything right still wasn't enough.

I urge you to vote in favor of LD 1259. Thank you for your time, I'm happy to answer any questions that you have