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LD 1259

My name is Jannika Coons. I am a born and raised Mainer living in Portland, and I am writing in support of both LD 1259 and LD 1971.

It is not an overstatement that these two bills will irrevocably shape the future of our state. The good news is that the decision is an easy one, the bad news is that it will take courage. Do we roll over and show our bellies to racist fear-mongering bigots, or will we choose to lead with justice, respect, and care for our fellow Mainers?

I hope it is the later.

It's difficult to write testimonies like this, because it feels inconceivable that we're actually debating whether or not we should care about other people. It should go without saying that immigrants are vital members of our communities and economies, just like anyone else. And, just like anyone else, they are entitled to the same inalienable constitutional rights guaranteeing them due process and equal protection under the law, regardless of their immigration status. However, the mass deportation – excuse me, mass abduction – agenda of the Trump administration grossly violates those rights.

Coming into the Summer season, I don't think I need to remind anyone that tourism is Maine's biggest industry. For months, news stories across the state have highlighted the rise of travel cancellations to popular destinations like Old Orchard Beach and Portland, specifically due to the fear of ICE detainment. Immigrant workers and immigrants visiting our great state are not only the backbone of tourism, but many other industries. They are the fastest growing workforce in this state (according to the 2023 US Census, 2 in 50 Maine residents is foreign-born)– starting businesses, raising families, paying taxes – and it is imperative that this legislature acknowledge their value, not only for their contributions to the economic future of Maine, but as human beings who are simply trying to make a life for themselves, **JUST LIKE ANYONE ELSE**.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge the Committee to act with courage to support both LD 1259 and LD 1971.