

Jeffrey Fischer
Bowdoinham
LD 1259

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Jeffrey Fischer, I live in Bowdoinham and I am here to testify in favor of LD 1259.

Since my retirement in 2011 after 30 years of teaching high school, I have devoted many hours to helping the immigrant community in Maine develop skills in the English language and in American citizenship — at The Telling Room, at Portland Adult Education, and at Midcoast Literacy. I have been privileged to know many immigrants and have noted their seriousness, their desire to learn, their hard work, and their ability to cope with difficult circumstances. I just have to think of my own grandparents to be reminded that all Americans — except for the indigenous — started off as immigrants.

While I believe that laws concerning immigration should be fair and should be enforced, I have become increasingly aware that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has not been enforcing our laws either fairly or legally. ICE has been running roughshod over the due process of the law that everyone in America, citizen or not, has the legal right to. Even the Supreme Court of the United States has become a voice in restraining the Executive branch from taking actions against immigrants without due process of the law. The President seems to counter that due process is too slow and too costly, that we are in such an emergency that we must ship “criminals” out of the country immediately, without actually knowing whether they are criminals or not.

I do not want to see law enforcement in Maine involved in any way with agreements that would put our own police in the service of the U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement.

Our police have plenty to do without additional work that they are not trained or qualified for. We don’t want them pulled away from the duties that we require police for in the first place.

In order for our police to do their jobs effectively, it is important for them to have the trust and confidence of the public. That public includes the substantial community of immigrants who live here, work here, pay taxes, and contribute to our society. Knowing that our police are under contract with ICE would likely damage that trust — because it has been shown again and again in recent months that ICE has targeted and will target people regardless of whether they have legal permission to be here.

Finally, we don’t want our police involved in activities that are of questionable legality. We don’t want them pulled into the court system for potentially illegal acts that ICE has implicated them in.

The language of LD 1259 is quite straightforward: “A law enforcement agency or law enforcement officer may not enter into a written or oral contract, agreement or arrangement that grants federal immigration enforcement authority or powers to the law enforcement agency or law enforcement officer, including an agreement pursuant to 8 United States Code, Section 1357(g).”

I urge you to vote that LD 1259 ought to pass.