

Jeffrey Fischer
Bowdoinham
LD 1971

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 1971.

I have already written testimony in favor of LD 1259.

My understanding of LD 1971 is that its intent is to allow law enforcement in Maine to investigate, arrest, or detain a person in matters involving suspected criminal activity — but to prohibit law enforcement from stopping, investigating, interrogating, arresting or detaining a person for immigration enforcement purposes.

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.

I think it is important and pertinent to acknowledge that immigrants are, on the whole, a benefit to Maine, and that we should welcome and support them. We need immigrants to work here, to pay taxes, to spend their money here, to raise their families here, and to help our state grow.

The narrative that gangs of immigrants are stealing our jobs and threatening our safety is a dangerous one that does not apply to our experience in Maine. Of course we should police criminal activity of immigrants — the same as we should police anyone's criminal activity.

But we should not contribute to creating a climate of fear among law-abiding immigrants. I'm afraid that the executive branch of our federal government aims to do exactly that, and that it empowers the Immigration and Customs Enforcement to create this fear.

My understanding of LD 1971 is that it restrains law enforcement and other agencies that are part of the state of Maine from joining in that kind of anti-immigrant hysteria.

I urge you to vote that LD 1971 ought to pass.