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LD 1971

I am Sandra Thomas from Bremen and I am submitting my testimony in support of LD 1971.

While I cannot speak to all of the details in this bill I broadly support the goal. We should not have Maine law enforcement encumbered with supporting immigration deportation efforts underway by the current federal administration. As you know, journalists are reporting that international students with valid visas or green cards have been deported for expressing political opinions or just for being from another country. These are not lawful detentions let alone grounds for deportation. When the federal government admittedly makes a mistake (Kilmar Abrego Garcia and others currently in El Salvador) they refuse to correct the problem.

Recently I attended a fair in Belfast where two participants one from the United Kingdom and the other from the Netherlands volunteered to me their fear that they might be deported by U.S. officials – both these people are here in the U.S. legally. I also attended a town hall in Lincoln County where four different individuals again, legally in the country, expressed terror about the current administration deporting them in venues such as their workplace, traffic stops, etc. They have been adjusting their lives dramatically to try to avoid the possibility of being detained. In Waldo County an immigrant family is afraid to go to work or school and relies on neighbors for financial and logistical support. Local news here reports that farmers and construction firms are afraid to bring immigrant workers to Maine for fear they will be detained and deported. Canadians are curtailing visits to Maine partly in response to border detentions. In addition to eroding our moral values these federal actions have a direct negative impact on Maine's economy.

When my parents moved to Maine a few years ago so I could help care for them I planned a trip for them to Campobello. Their passports and driver licenses had expired. I called the border authorities to find out what I should do to enable them to bring them across the border from Lubec for the Campobello visit. The border patrol indicated there would be no problem – they had seniors crossing the border frequently and made allowance for their age and interest in visiting.

What has happened to our country and our values? This bill will only address some of these immigration problems, but it is a start.