

Julia Bouwsma
Kingfield
LD 1259

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Julia Bouwsma. I live in New Portland (Somerset County), and serve as Library Director for Webster Library in Kingfield (Franklin County), as well as Maine's current Poet Laureate. I am writing today to testify in favor of LD 1259 and LD 1971.

Several weeks ago, I was working at Webster Library in Kingfield when a vehicle was pulled over by an unmarked Franklin County Sheriff's Dept. vehicle in front of the library. I and multiple other community members stood present as witnesses while a traffic stop for failure to wear a seatbelt led to the Latino occupants of the vehicle being detained and arrested by Border Patrol. Among those watching this obvious incident of racial profiling were children who were at the library for our weekly Lego Club and who knew and identified these men as construction workers who had been completing renovations at the local Montessori preschool where they are students. Although I was able to contact the director of the preschool who in turn contacted their employer who confirmed that these individuals did indeed have valid visas and paperwork, they are, to my knowledge, still in custody. Other than a seatbelt violation and the fact they were driving the contractor's vehicle, there was no reason given for their arrest.

Incidents such as this cause irreparable harm in small towns. They breach trust in law enforcement and harm the ability of good people to do good work to make our communities stronger. Both the children and adults who witnessed this event were deeply upset and continue to have many unanswered questions about how and why something like this would happen in our small town. How many of those witnesses will now hesitate to seek out help from law enforcement should they need it in the future? How is our community made safer by the arrest of two law-abiding workers who were contributing to our town in a positive manner by literally helping to build a safe space for our children? LD 1259 and LD 1971 will provide crucial clarity between local law enforcement and immigration authorities to hopefully prevent such incidents from occurring again in the future.

I urge you to vote in favor of both LD 1259 and LD 1971. Thank you for your time.

Julia Bouwsma