

Public Testimony in Support of LD 1259

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. My name is Katie Coe, I live in Bangor, and I am writing in support of LD 1259.

Every policy decision is an opportunity to choose good government. We have the power—and the responsibility—to shape our laws to reflect our values of fairness, public safety, and community care.

Some of my neighbors are immigrants, and I'm scared for them. I see the federal government changing rules at a moment's notice, with little regard for the harm it causes. Now, with local police in Maine being asked to help enforce federal immigration law through programs like 287(g), I'm even more concerned.

The 287(g) program turns local officers into extensions of ICE. It forces them to take on duties they are not trained for, such as executing ICE warrants that a judge has not even reviewed. That's not justice—that's government overreach. And it has real, harmful consequences.

These programs make our communities less safe. When immigrants fear that any interaction with local police could lead to deportation, they are less likely to report crimes or cooperate with investigations. That doesn't protect anyone—it only isolates people and makes it harder to solve serious crimes. The International Association of Chiefs of Police has said it clearly: we need immigrant communities to trust local police if we want to keep everyone safe.

287(g) also drains local resources. In other parts of the country, these agreements have cost millions of dollars—money that has been taken away from public services or raised through tax hikes. Our officers are already stretched thin. They don't need another unfunded, unnecessary responsibility—especially one that increases the risk of costly civil rights lawsuits.

Beyond the financial costs, we must also consider the human cost. What is the value of a human life? To me, it's everything. All we truly have are our lives, our love for one another, and our sense of community. I feel incredibly lucky to live in a city where my neighbors include immigrants who contribute so much to our neighborhoods, our economy, and our shared well-being.

As a resident of Maine, I want my tax dollars to support my neighbors, not to tear them away from their families and loved ones.

I urge you to support LD 1259 and ensure that Maine law enforcement serves the people of Maine, rather than prioritizing federal immigration enforcement. Let's keep our communities safe, united, and grounded in human dignity.

I would also like to note that I support LD 1971. Thank you for your time and consideration.