

My name is Connie McVey and I live in Bangor, Maine. I am giving testimony to urge legislators to pass LD 1259-An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement. Deputizing local police to carry out federal immigration enforcement turns every routine encounter into a potential deportation risk. Despite rhetoric, the 287(g) Program, which makes local police into ICE agents, overwhelmingly impacts people with no criminal history through minor traffic offenses. A 2011 Migration Policy Institute report found that half of all detainers issued were for misdemeanors and traffic infractions. We can't afford to strain local resources. 287 (g) agreements divert resources away from the investigation of serious crimes and other state and local police responsibilities. Our police are already strained. The last thing they need is another responsibility in an area of law that is constantly changing.

Programs like 287(g) make everyone less safe. They create fear, not cooperation. We all want safety, but safety means being able to call the police when something's wrong, no matter who you are or how you look. When people don't trust police, they're less likely to report domestic violence, fraud, or unsafe working conditions—issues that affect everyone in a community, not just immigrants. Immigration enforcement doesn't just affect people without legal status. U.S. citizens and lawful residents have been mistakenly detained and even deported. These deportations don't just affect individuals—they tear apart families, disrupt workplaces, and ripple through communities.

I am a licensed clinical social worker at Acadia Hospital and a volunteer at the Maine Multicultural Center (MMC). The immigrant families MMC service are hard working people who are contributing to our local community, working in jobs that have had openings for a while, jobs that many Mainers would not want. They are not only actively contributing to our community but also integrating into our community in positive ways. The families I am supporting attend church and community social events with me and this has enriched everyone involved. Their children attend our local public schools and their presence enriches the school community, via diversity, language and culture. We live in a world that is increasingly global; therefore, bringing immigrants from all over the world into Maine enriches and strengthens our communities, not weakens them. Many of our Maine children will never travel abroad to meet people of different cultures, who speak different languages. Having a more diverse school population, with immigrants from all over the world allows our children to expand their knowledge, their understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures. These experiences may inspire them to travel abroad someday. Our children learn that while there are many differences between people of diverse nationalities, there are more similarities among them than they could even imagine.

Maine State Legislators, I implore you to vote YES on LD1259, a bill that encourages community safety, protects those most vulnerable in our community and prevents a diversion of resources from the investigation of serious crimes.

Respectfully submitted by Connie McVey, Bangor, Maine 4/1/25

