

Sarah Duncan  
Lewiston  
LD 1259

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Sarah Duncan and I am a high school history teacher living in Lewiston and teaching in Freeport. I am writing today to testify in favor of LD 1259 and LD 1971, because without exception, Maine's law enforcement should absolutely not work with ICE. Immigrants are a vital part of our community, state economy,

As a history teacher, I teach U.S. history. Throughout this country's history, America has targeted immigrants. I teach my students about the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Operation "Wetback" in the 1950s (this was the actual name of the program) which targeted Mexican workers, and the lesser known group, the Know Nothing Party. The Know Nothing Party existed in the mid-1800s, and their motto was "America First" and "America Ruled by Americans." In their case, they were largely protesting against Irish Catholic immigrants. And they did so with violence and bigotry, especially at the legislative level. This intense, targeted hatred of immigrants, paired with messaging that they are "criminals," is one of the oldest ways those in power manipulate their country's people. But there are also the people, throughout every wave of hatred against immigrants, that stand with the immigrants and work to protect them.

My high school students are scared of this country. They are all citizens, but they are terrified by what they see their country doing to people, and I am too. How can I teach students American ideals when they see their country rounding up Venezuelan people without due process and sending them to a foreign prison, arresting immigrant minors at routine traffic stops, canceling student immigrant visas, and arresting immigrant student activists on the street with no warning. ICE is a violent group that has been given a free pass to round people up without due process, and this causes immense fear and harm. How are immigrant children going to feel safe going to school? How are people going to feel safe going to their jobs? If local police departments in Maine pair with ICE this will terrorize our beloved community members into the shadows, regardless of their immigration status, because we are seeing, every day, that from naturalized citizens to green card holders, people are harassed, detained, and deported.

As a proud state that has historically welcomed New Mainers, cooperating with ICE at this level goes against the values of our communities. It should absolutely be illegal in Maine for police departments to work with ICE. Doing so will embolden both police and local people to racially profile and threaten people that we want here in Maine, not deported or in prison.

My students know that they are living through a dark chapter in any future US history textbook. But even in the most horrible chapters of history, there are the helpers. There are those who do not budge. Maine must pass LD 1259 and LD 1971 as a way to show the next generation of Mainers what our values truly are — and that we're willing to draw a line in the sand to enact them. Please give my students something real and just to believe in.