

Malvina Gregory  
Portland ME  
May 19, 2025

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in **SUPPORT of LD 1259 “An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement.”**

I have worked many years with Maine’s Latinx community in many roles: as a social worker, as an interpreter, and as a friend receiving scared phone calls in the middle of the night. From each of these roles, I can tell you that signing a 287(g) agreement to deputize local law enforcement to carry out federal immigration enforcement actions on behalf of ICE is a very bad idea for public safety.

There has been evidence for some time that immigration involvement with local law enforcement has a detrimental effect on public safety. Undocumented persons have always been some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, often falling prey to unsavory individuals who steal their wages, traffic them across state lines, rob their belongings or cash, and who through it all threaten them with immigration action to force their silence. Domestic violence abusers often keep their victims in an undocumented state, as it provides them with another form of control. If we want these bad actors to be stopped, then people who are undocumented must be able to report their experiences to law enforcement without fear of immigration involvement. Deputizing local law enforcement into an extension of ICE makes every minor engagement a deportation risk. A poll of Latinos in Southwestern California, conducted by Lake Research Partners, found that 44% of Latinos surveyed said they would be less likely to report being a victim of a crime for fear the police would ask about their documented status (Kirk & Fagan, 2012). Major law enforcement groups and leaders have argued that intensifying immigration enforcement impedes public safety goals, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Major Cities Chiefs Association (The Sentencing Project, 2017).

Another not-new-idea is that our communities are a blend of mixed statuses—there are undocumented people living alongside documented individuals. Immigration enforcement impacts everyone. Families are torn apart, and intact families worry about their safety. Following immigration raids and deportations, community members are often more fearful and mistrustful of public institutions, and less likely to participate in churches, schools, health clinics, cultural activities, and social services (Day Langhout, et al, 2018; Kerani et al, 2018). So increased involvement of ICE activities into local law enforcement means that not just undocumented individuals, but rather ALL immigrant communities will experience increased anxiety, reduced social engagement, reduced accessing of social and health services, and decreased engagement with law enforcement.

To make a bad idea worse, recent ICE activities have not been reassuring. They have shown a general disregard for one’s legal immigration status and for due process, detaining individuals with every right to walk freely on our streets and refusing to release them, moving them to detainment centers far away from their loved ones and their legal representation. Within the detainment centers there are also concerns of medical neglect and overcrowding. Since

January 20, 2025, nine people have died in ICE custody, almost the same number as who died in all of 2024 (Golgowski, 2025). Quite frankly, I'm not sure that I would trust them to hold my purse, much less oblige our law enforcement agencies to do their bidding.

My dear legislators, you have the ability to send a reassuring message to Maine's immigrant communities. There are many who are scared and who do not know if their homes will be safe for much longer. You have the ability to reaffirm that the presence of immigrants makes our communities stronger and more vibrant, and yes, SAFER. (Spiro, 2025; Mohyeddin, 2025) and that 287(g) agreements of any kind are harmful to public safety and our communities overall.

For all these reasons I urge you to vote **YES IN FAVOR OF LD 1259**.

#### References:

Day Langhout, R., Buckingham, S.L. Kaur Oberoi, A., Rubén Chávez, N., Rusch, D., Esposito, F., and Suarez-Balcazar, Y. (2018) Statement on the Effects of Deportation and Forced Separation on Immigrants, their Families, and Communities. American Journal of Community Psychology. Vol 62, Issue 1-2, pp 3-12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12256>

Ghandnoosh, N. & Rovner, J. (2017) Immigration and Public Safety. The Sentencing Project. 2017 <https://www.sentencingproject.org/app/uploads/2022/10/Immigration-and-Public-Safety.pdf>

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