

May 17, 2025

To Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Leeann Sullivan and I live in Ellsworth, Maine. I am writing today in support of LD1259, *An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement*.

As an academic researcher who has spent well over a decade studying democratic political institutions, I know the importance of strong social bonds in our communities, and the risks to the democratic structures of government when that social cohesion is lost. The use of 287(g) agreements and other structures of cooperation between local and federal law enforcement agencies pose a direct threat to our communities in two ways – first by decreasing trust in public institutions, and second by redirecting vital tax-payer dollars away from Mainers in need.

First, 287(g) agreements represent a crucial disruption to public trust in our institutions. Locally, this may include reduced trust in local law enforcement, and when people don't trust police, or fear that contact with police will result in the targeting of their own families or communities, they are significantly less likely to report criminal behavior in their neighborhoods. This is particularly important because today, we have evidence to suggest that those being targeted under existing 287(g) agreements overwhelmingly have *no criminal history*. In other words, these contracts between local and federal agencies *increase* the likelihood that our non-violent neighbors and friends may be detained and deported, while simultaneously *decreasing* the likelihood that individuals actually causing harm in our communities are held to account for their actions.

And this doesn't stop at contact with law enforcement. Those who fear deportation – including in a growing number of cases those who are here in Maine through legal means – are also significantly more likely to avoid contact with the state or state-adjacent offices in totality for fear that private information about them and their families will be passed to law enforcement. In many cases, that means missed prenatal appointments for expectant mothers; missed dialysis treatments; missed days at school for children and teens; and missed meals for parents too afraid to access public resources. Our communities simply cannot thrive in such an environment of fear.

Beyond this, we know from evidence across the country that 287(g) agreements are putting a significant financial strain on local communities to do work that is purely in the purview of federal authorities. Such agreements may also open local towns and cities to litigation, as many of the actions of federal immigration agencies in the past 5 months have been found to be unconstitutional or in violation of well-established legal statute. This represents both a financial

and capacity burden on already-overburdened local agencies, and a possible fracture point in public trust of government institutions. This is particularly true when valuable resources that would have to be directed to law enforcement to account for increased costs associated with 287(g) agreements could be otherwise supporting Maine families, veterans, and children.

I support LD 1259 because I know how vitally important public trust and legitimacy are to a functioning government, and I see local cooperation with federal immigration agencies as likely to disrupt that trust. I also know my community up here in Hancock County is resilient *because* we are so connected to one another and show up for each other in times of need. LD1259 reaffirms our commitment to one another in our communities and across our state, and I therefore urge you to vote in favor of this bill. Thank you.