

## **Testimony of Lani Graham, MD, MPH**

### **Supporting LD 1971**

#### **An Act to Protect Workers in This State by Clarifying the Relationship of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies with Federal Immigration Authorities**

#### **Presented by Representative Dhalac**

#### **Before the Judiciary Committee, May 19, 2025**

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Lani Graham I am a physician, and I live in Freeport. I am proud to support LD 1971 as a native Mainer and as the descendant of ancestors who have lived in this country since before the American Revolution. These are troubled times but an important thing many of us share is immigrant status, which should help us to understand both the importance and the vulnerability of being an immigrant.

Ironically there is one person on this committee whose ancestors were part of those who were here before most of us ever arrived. He must view this discussion with mixed emotions, as real trouble for his ancestors started when mine arrived. I acknowledge that I stand on land once enjoyed by the Wabanaki alone. And I imagine that the welcome my ancestors got from Native Americans was much better than some immigrants are receiving today. But we are not here today to discuss those challenges.

Instead, I want to make a few points in support of this bill. Our country has always welcomed immigrants because these are the people that have made our country one of the strongest in the world in every way. It is why so many want to come here. But in recent years, there has been an outpouring of invective against immigrants, calling them “animals”, “rapists”, “in many cases from jails, prisons, from mental institutions, insane asylums, poisoning the blood of our country “. <sup>1</sup> Given this kind of rhetoric, it is no wonder that many people have become fearful of immigrants despite the lack of foundation for these assertions. <sup>2</sup>

The result has been that the current Administration is so eager to assure that no immigrants cross our borders that some people have been snatched off the streets and imprisoned for simply exercising their right to free speech. These people have had to get lawyers and have spent weeks in prison. Two hundred and thirty-eight Venezuelans were sent to a notorious prison in El Salvador without their constitutional right to due process. And at least one person was exported by mistake.

Meanwhile Maine’s economy is partially sustained by hardworking, committed immigrants. There are thousands of immigrants working in Maine, usually taking jobs not of interest to native Mainers. They pay millions in taxes; they contribute to social

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trump-degrading-language-immigrants-rcna171120>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2024/10/24/fact-check-trump-statements-immigrants-takeaways>

security, and they help sustain our tourism industry. The overwhelming majority of these Maine people are entirely legal. We need our immigrant friends and neighbors to receive all the rights and protections they are due by law. LD 1971 would support that.

Equally important, it is not a good use of Maine law enforcement resources to help Federal Immigration efforts. Maine law enforcement is already overburdened. Federal immigration law is complex. Maine resources, already stretched, are needed to support Maine communities. And the collaboration of immigration and Maine law enforcement could discourage immigrants from turning to local law enforcement to report crimes or seek health care in hospitals or attend school.

LD 1971 is a very modest approach to solving these problems. I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your attention.