

Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary RE: “An Act to Protect Workers in This State by Clarifying the Relationship of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies with Federal Immigration Authorities”, May 19, 2025, 1PM

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Zoë Lidstrom and I am a resident of Lewiston. **I am testifying in support of 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.”

As you know, Lewiston is a community struggling with gun violence. I keep up with local news and recently read a Sun Journal article quoting a Lewiston police officer who was frustrated that Lewiston residents are unwilling to speak to police about active cases. I immediately wrote to the Chief of Police, saying that it’s no wonder that people are afraid to come forward, even if they do have evidence, when doing so might result in their arrest or deportation. People in my community are afraid to go to the food pantry or to church; why would they seek out interactions with the police?

Local police are charged with upholding public safety, not the law writ large. Plenty of criminal activity happens all around us every day, but it's not up to local police to deal with this criminal activity. The police aren't knocking on my door if I pirate a movie or commit tax fraud (for example). Even in cases of major crime, local police are not involved beyond the initial response (something I learned after the October 25 shooting, when the investigation was handed over to the state police). Instead, our local police officers are tasked with stopping the kind of crime that immediately threatens public safety: shootings, dangerous driving, theft.

Describing people as "illegal immigrants" or, more derogatorily, "illegals", conflates legality with public safety. Someone's entry into the United States through means other than those prescribed by law may technically make that entry illegal, but it doesn't threaten public safety, and it doesn't mean that individual is more likely to commit violent crime. (Non-citizens are, in fact, *less* likely to commit crimes than citizens.)

If somebody's immigration status is discovered when they are apprehended for *actually committing a crime*, that is one thing. The racial profiling that results when illegal immigration is itself treated like a crime under the jurisdiction of local police, and the fear this creates within communities, is another. Creating this kind of fear only inhibits public safety when people no longer trust that local law enforcement cares about their safety. **Please vote YES on LD 1971.**

Sincerely,

Zoë Lidstrom