

Ashley Bahlkow  
North Yarmouth  
LD 1259

My name is Ashley Bahlkow I live in North Yarmouth, and I am testifying in favor of LD 1259.

We need to protect immigrants and people of color who may be targeted from the escalated and in many cases unconstitutional arrests and deportations. Despite the divisive and hateful rhetoric, undocumented folks are people with jobs in our communities, children in our schools, neighbors, volunteers and people who make important contributions to our communities and our economy. I have worked with immigrants and refugees for many years and I know this to be true. While the vast majority are not criminals, I also believe that people make mistakes and no one should be deported for minor traffic or misdemeanor infractions and even for greater infractions, there should be fair due process as our constitution outlines FOR ALL PEOPLE.

We have seen many people wrongfully detained and deported without due process, many whose civil rights have been violated, and treated without dignity and respect our country and laws require of all people, despite their immigration status. This bill is important in protecting people's civil and human rights and preventing the further escalation of "disappearing people", which has happened many many times over the past months. It's appalling and just plain wrong.

Programs like 287(g) make everyone less safe. They create fear, not cooperation. I want safety. This means being able to call the police when something's wrong, no matter who you are or how you look. When people don't trust police, they're less likely to report domestic violence, fraud, or unsafe working conditions—issues that affect everyone in a community, not just immigrants.

287 (g) agreements also divert resources away from the investigation of serious crimes and other state and local police. Our police doesn't have the capacity to do this, especially considering the fact that it would add responsibility in an area of law that is constantly changing.

Furthermore, immigration enforcement doesn't just affect people without legal status. As we have seen recently and been horrified by, citizens and lawful residents have been mistakenly detained and even deported. These deportations don't just affect individuals—they tear apart families, disrupt workplaces, and ripple through communities. They are also creating a situation where law enforcement officials' actions are violating people's rights, as given by the Constitution. These terrible infractions degrade law enforcement as a whole, meaning fewer people trust the police or see them as a resource. As a white citizen, I myself have become very afraid of the police and what they might do to my friends and neighbors of color. I don't know what to tell my kids but I certainly cannot tell them the police are people they can trust. I say this to emphasize the problem of public trust in law enforcement eroding for us all, not just our undocumented neighbors who we worry and pray for very much.