

Testimony in Support of LD 1259

An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement

May 19, 2025 | Judiciary Committee | 1:00 PM

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Ellen McFarland. I am a resident of Portland, Maine, and I serve as the Deputy Director of ProsperityME, an organization dedicated to empowering immigrants in Maine through financial literacy, education, housing, career development, and other support services. I am writing today to express my strong support for LD 1259.

Every day, at ProsperityME, we work with new Mainers—families and individuals who contribute to our state’s economy, culture, and communities. They pay taxes, open businesses, and send their children to school with the same hopes and dreams as any other parent. These community members deserve to feel safe when interacting with local law enforcement—not fearful that a minor traffic stop or call for help could result in detention or deportation.

LD 1259 is essential because programs like 287(g) undermine public safety and fracture the trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement. Deputizing local police to enforce federal immigration law does not make our communities safer—it makes them more fearful.

The recent decision by the Wells Police Department to enter into a 287(g) Task Force-style agreement is deeply concerning. Local law enforcement officers are not trained immigration agents, and these agreements risk diverting limited local resources away from investigating serious crimes that affect all of us.

Furthermore, the risk of wrongful detention—including of U.S. citizens and legal residents—is not hypothetical. It has happened before, and it will happen again unless we draw a clear line between federal immigration enforcement and local policing. LD 1259 would do exactly that.

At ProsperityME, we believe public safety must be defined by trust and accountability. If people cannot turn to the police for help when they need it most, all of us are less safe. That’s why I urge this committee to pass LD 1259. Let’s uphold Maine’s values of fairness, community, and safety for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ellen McFarland
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