

Priscilla Dreyman
South Portland
LD 1971

Dear Judiciary Committee,

My name is Priscilla Dreyman. I am a retired United Methodist minister in Maine, where I have served urban, suburban, rural and island churches across the state. I was also the founding executive director of the nonprofit community arts program, SPIRAL Arts in Portland, for 22 years. I have come to know and love many immigrants-- individuals and families-- hearing their stories of unspeakable treatment, fear, torture, or threat of genocide in their countries of origin. They desperately needed to find asylum elsewhere, and for many that has been here in the welcoming (for the most part) State of Maine, often from faith communities and small nonprofits. The challenge of getting a work permit, entering the asylum seeking process, finding a lawyer, learning English, and awaiting hearings in US Immigration court are grueling and intimidating and degrading. The immigrants in Maine have gone through hell and back to be here. And they have contributed so much to the State of Maine workforce, economy, and culture in the midst of the challenges mentioned.

Today I ask you to support LD 1259 and LD 1971, allowing our State law enforcement agencies to be protectors/defenders of our immigrant population (members of our Maine communities) and not become an arm of ICE. Please act to keep State and Federal agencies separate in their duties and not complicit in capturing immigrants and possibly not affording them their rights to a hearing or even knowing what the charges are against them. Immigrants in Maine, as elsewhere, do not deserve to live in terror once again in the very place that offered them refuge. Thank you.