

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Becca Shaw Glaser. I live in Rockport and I strongly support LD 1259 and LD 1971.

This is my first time testifying before a Maine legislative committee. I'm compelled because of the climate of fear we're living in. I'm compelled by a fierce protectiveness of my loved ones. I'm compelled because of history, because of the current regressive moment where cruelty towards the most vulnerable is openly celebrated, and because last I checked, I still have the relative safety to speak out.

Recently I asked a friend in midcoast Maine, who is a person of color and a U.S. citizen, if he would be going to the large rally in Augusta opposing the authoritarian regime. He said no, it wasn't safe for him.

A few weeks ago I was visiting a dear friend in New York City, one of the most immigrant-, and ethnically-diverse places on the planet, and asked her if she had been going to any of the anti-Trump, anti-Musk protests. No, she said, it wasn't safe for her, or her children. And then I remembered, not only is she a person of color, but an immigrant. Though she has been here for over twenty years, is a permanent resident, she's now carrying her green card at all times, and living with a level of fear she had not had before. She said she's not sure she is welcome or wanted in this country anymore.

Another friend, one of my closest, was scheduled for his U.S. citizenship interview recently, after being in the U.S. for twenty years with a green card. I found myself being relieved that, in this country which hammered into us from my first day of school pledging daily allegiance to the flag at Rockport Elementary School with my little hand on my heart, about "liberty and justice for all" and about how much it prized "free speech," I felt relief that my friend has not been an activist, never signed his name to an op-ed with an opinion the current government, to maintain its own power, disagrees with. Lately I've found myself wondering if I might be a liability to him, having been outspoken my whole life. He's come to Maine to visit me many times, but right now, I would be scared to have him take the bus to Maine to visit me. Indeed, lawyers are now advising their immigrant clients to not work in Maine. Ultimately, we decided it was not safe for him to go to his citizenship interview due to the risk of deportation.

I love Maine. I was born here, and I'm grateful for the ways Maine recently has refused to capitulate to today's cruel tyrants who manipulate millions of people into believing that immigrants are their enemy, into believing that an enormous budget to round up, imprison, and deport people who are often fleeing violence and repression, is going to somehow save them money, somehow give them more freedom and joy. It helps to distract them from the fact that these same politicians are also taking away food stamps, food for food banks, health care, and making themselves richer.

Passing these bills would send a message to my loved ones and so many others, that this country is not quite as broadly cruel as it seems lately on the federal level. And I hope these bills will remain no matter who the president is. This administration will eventually pass. After that, we can't go back to the same cruel deportation and anti-asylum seeker programs which many Democrats have also supported. Maine should lead the way.