
**Testimony of Andrea Mancuso, on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
In Support of LD 1259, “An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the
Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement,” and 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.”**

Monday, May 18, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, I am writing on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)¹ in support of both LD 1259 and LD 1971. Maine’s network of domestic violence victim services providers has one primary goal: to support the safety and stability of anyone in our community experiencing domestic abuse and violence. To do that, those who are experiencing domestic abuse and violence must see our services as available to them and as safe to reach out to. Increasingly in the last several months, that has not been the case for many immigrant victims of domestic abuse and violence in our state, and these bills would help to address that.

Our network of victim services providers worked with more than 250 victims last year who identified as part of Maine’s immigrant/refugee population. This represented an 80% increase since 2019. Though we have been more and more successful in reaching these survivors each year, and supporting their safety needs, many of the immigrant/refugee victims of domestic abuse and violence in our state are now afraid to reach out. Our members who work closely with these communities report a pervasive sense of fear and anxiety, which is causing particular challenges for victims, who are unsure where to turn for help in the current climate. In the last several months, our 24/7 helpline has experienced a decrease in calls from victims who are not US citizens. Instead, we are seeing a sharp uptick in calls from community members who are calling on behalf of those victims, because they are too afraid to reach out for help on their own due to concern that doing so would flag them for federal immigration officials. With federal immigration authorities repeatedly and

¹ MCEDV serves a membership of eight regional domestic violence resource centers as well as two culturally specific service providers. Our member programs provided services to more than 12,000 victims of domestic abuse and violence and their children in Maine last year.

publicly shunning basic due process, even those immigrants who have some level of protected status are experiencing this kind of fear and reluctance. When victims of domestic violence are afraid to reach out for help, the abuse continues unchecked, and our communities are less safe.

Survivors of domestic abuse and violence face so many barriers to achieving safety and stability – to even reaching out for help at all. Only half of all victims of domestic violence will ever report the abuse to law enforcement – that number is even smaller for survivors who do not identify as Caucasian, and even smaller still for those survivors who speak something other than English as their primary language. Ultimately, whether to report to law enforcement is the choice of each individual survivor, and our network provides support regardless of that choice. However, recent reports of local law enforcement contracting and information sharing with federal immigration authorities has not only had a chilling effect on the willingness of survivors who may be profiled as non-US citizens to report the crimes committed against them to the police, it has also had a chilling effect on these survivors reaching out for service and supports from community organizations like Maine’s domestic violence services providers.

Both bills will help to place reasonable guardrails, preventing local law enforcement from being co-opted by federal immigration officials, leaving them to do what we need them to do most in our communities, be trusted partners in addressing local public safety concerns. All victims of domestic violence in our communities need to be able to trust that reaching out for help, whether that is to local police or a community service provider, is safer than staying silent. That is not the case in Maine right now, and MCEDV encourages you to take action to change that.

Contact Information:

Andrea Mancuso, Esq.

Public Policy Director

Ph: (207) 650-4356

Email: andrea@mcedv.org