

Joan Beal
Norway
LD 1259

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am testifying in support of LD 1259. I feel very strongly for many reasons, both constitutionally and humanitarily, that our local law enforcement agencies should not be collaborating or cooperating with the federal government's Immigration and Customs Enforcement program. If we were living in what used to be "normal" times, when the Federal government operated according to due process and with a regard for the separation of powers, I would not be in favor of the state prohibiting municipal governments from performing activities which they might take on under well-defined circumstances. However, the Federal government is NOT operating constitutionally in their deportation of immigrants, due process has not been observed, tragic mistakes have occurred, and immigrant communities are being targeted under false declarations. Federal courts have concurred with this and yet they continue. We have the right and the responsibility to prevent these illegal actions against our state's residents.

Our local law enforcement officers have a mission to serve and protect our people. Helping ICE carry out raids without judicial warrants means that the work of our local police and sheriff's departments, in protecting our communities from true criminal activity, may be used to make some of our law abiding, immigrant community even less safe. We all want drug traffickers, violent criminals and gang members off our streets. This is not an issue of being "soft on crime". We know from law suits, public reports, and even the words of ICE agents themselves, that innocent people with legal rights to be here, are being swept up by unidentified, masked agents who often have no legal (according to our Constitution) grounds for detaining them. Our local law enforcement community, which adheres to legal procedures, should not be accessories to this.

The Maine immigrant community is hard working and makes a large contribution to our state. I have worked with a number of families. Some of the adults hold two or even three jobs as they wait for naturalization or for their asylum cases to be heard. They are legal residents and should not live in fear that their safe status can be forever ended and their families separated.

I urge you to vote to pass this bill on to the whole Legislature.