



Maine Equal Justice
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MEJ Testimony in Support of LD 1259, An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement & 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

May 19, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Dina Malual (she/hers) and I am a Policy Advocate with Maine Equal Justice (MEJ), a nonprofit legal aid provider working to increase economic security, opportunity, and equity for people in Maine. We are pleased to testify in support of LDs 1259 and 1971.

Recent legislation targeting specific minority groups raises constitutional concerns, and fails to acknowledge the very real contributions by immigrants to Maine's economy and community.

LD 1259 prohibits state or local law enforcement agencies from entering into contracts with federal immigration enforcement authorities. Intended to work together, LD 1971 clarifies the relationship between state/local law enforcement and federal agencies. This bill outlines the rights and responsibilities reserved for specific agencies and ensures that Maine residents are not subject to unlawful questioning, arrests, and investigation for the purposes of immigration enforcement.

Both bills work together to protect Maine residents. By allowing local or state law enforcement agencies to act beyond their jurisdiction, we are granting federal agencies the privilege to interfere with local matters when convenient. **These agreements prioritize federal interests over local needs.**

As local law enforcement agencies across Maine consider 287(g) agreements, a set of partnerships between ICE and state and local law enforcement agencies that effectively turns local officials into ICE agents, we must be informed of federal

operations and question how our local resources are being used to carry out harmful investigations and arrests. This partnership diverts our local resources and threatens all people, regardless of their immigration status. 287(g) agreements are harmful and undermine public safety, strain local resources, and increase police liability.

We strongly support language in LD 1971 that prohibits employees other than law enforcement officers from inquiring into immigration status unless required by law or necessary to provide the service sought by the resident. This measure ensures that people are not subject to profiling due to immigration status.

People are afraid of their immigration status being used against them. Community members do not believe that their information is kept private and safe. At Maine Equal Justice we help people access public benefits and the number one question as of late has been about data privacy concerns. People are having to consider whether they should apply for food support or risk being questioned about their immigration status. State employees should not have access to such sensitive information and people should not fear seeking support for their families.

There is a belief that granting local law agencies the right to carry out federal priorities will make our communities safer because people associate crime with immigrants. This is not true. This responsibility decreases trust in local law enforcement and makes immigrant communities less likely to come forward with information that could help solve or prevent crime. Our resources are limited, with overtime spending on police increasing by almost 30 percent over the last 5 years.¹ It is not in our financial interest to over extend our local resources.

Immigrants are vital members of our communities and we must protect their constitutional rights. 287(g) agreements divide Maine residents and target immigrants. LDs 1259 and 1971 support Mainers and encourage local law enforcement to maintain their right to govern independently. We ask the committee to vote in support of LDs 1259 and 1971.

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<https://www.police1.com/police-recruitment/maine-state-police-hits-record-overtime-spending-marking-29-jump-in-5-years>