

Hannah Schlotterbeck  
Brunswick  
LD 1383

Honorable Members of the Committee on State and Local Government

My name is Hannah Schlotterbeck, and I am a children's mental health therapist in public schools here in Maine, a resident of Brunswick, a mom to two amazing young children, and the wife of a Latin American immigrant. I am testifying today in strong support of LD 1383, because I believe this would be an essential and important step in ending our state's complicity in human rights violations both at home and abroad.

I have a number of children on my clinical caseload who have been deeply impacted by ICE's vicious attacks on residents here in Maine and across the country. Children who live in fear of their mom, their brother, their uncle, their Grandma, their friend being kidnapped and taken away by men in masks with guns. I meet with a 6 year old child who is afraid of knocks on the front door at his home because of previous scares. And as much as I work to provide a sense of safety and stability to my own children, they have an awareness of reality based on protests and rallies they have attended and conversations they overhear. My 7 year old asks about who is carrying whistles, when cars pull over in front of our house he runs to lock the front door, and last week when there was a brief scare that his own father may have been detained by ICE, and then possibly a close family friend, this fear grew in a way we didn't have control over. When we reassured him that everyone we know is ok and he doesn't need to worry he responded "yes, I do. Not everyone is safe. They are taking people."

I also meet with a number of children for therapy who have been personally impacted by the genocide in Gaza, as well as those who are a bit older and understand this country's role in Palestine. I had a 10 year old child ask me "if they won't keep children safe in Palestine, if our leaders don't care that children are being killed, why would they care about me? Then no children, anywhere, are really safe." My clients have a way of thinking about the world that many adults could learn from. That what is happening is not OK, and that there is not an excuse for making "unkind and unsafe choices."

My own young children, and most of the children I meet with for therapy are young, between the ages of 4 and 8, not yet old enough to understand the full complexities of the current climate in this country, the complexities of the history of this country. Nor are they responsible for making the change, for carrying the weight of how to keep themselves, their families, and their community members safe. But they feel it in their bodies when they know something is wrong, and this impacts every aspect of their development, their ability to learn, their mental health, and the way in which they move through the school, the community, and the world. The adults and leaders in Maine carry this responsibility, and it is of the upmost importance to protect Mainers, all Mainers, to keep children and their families safe, to be able to say with conviction that the people in charge in this state care, and will fight hard for these protections. Maine has been a leader in many ways over the years, and it is time for Maine to once again take a legal stance to protect those living here, and to be an example of how to align ethics and values with state policy. Please be the leader these children need. Thank you for your time, I have hope that LD 1383 will pass with strong support.