

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and honorable members of the Committee,

I am testifying in support of LD 1383, *An Act To Require the State To Divest Itself of Assets Invested in Corporations That Contribute to Genocide and Human Rights Abuses*. I am one of over 7,000 social workers in the state of Maine, who provide mental and behavioral health services for Mainers, aligned with the Social Work Code of Ethics. I believe Maine has an ethical obligation to separate itself from corporations that contribute to human rights abuses and perpetuate harm in our communities.

Social workers advocate for human rights and social justice; improving the social determinants of health is foundational to creating healthy communities. US immigration enforcement as it is being implemented locally, and economic support for genocide in other nations, perpetuate inhumane treatment, separate families and inflict emotional and physical harm. Across the US, areas that have experienced internal immigration enforcement have documented the negative impact on immigrant communities, particularly immigrant youth, who display higher levels of emotional distress, leading to greater rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The stress placed on families contributes to Adverse Childhood Experiences, which are associated with high risk behaviors and early mortality in adulthood. We have all witnessed how recent ICE interactions across the nation have led to more fear and instability.

In my clinical practice, I have personally heard heartbreakingly testimony from family members of people who have been transported to other states and held for deportation in unbearable conditions. I have counseled many families, regardless of their immigration status, who experience even the possibility of separation, of arrest and deportation, as a daily threat. As a result, my clients are too afraid to leave their homes, receive medical care and mental health services, access stores and supermarkets, or fulfill employment obligations to support their families. Supporting Mainers who have escaped from genocide in their countries of origin, I also treat the impacts of trauma. I will never forget when the mother I was counseling was interrupted by a phone call to

learn during therapy that a loved one was murdered back home; she lived in perpetual fear that neither she nor her family abroad would ever be safe.

I believe strongly that Maine must take every opportunity to improve the health and well-being of all people, including when it comes to investment practices that align with ethical choices for the people of our state. Trauma has reverberations in our society and consequences for the future; we have to look no farther than the narratives of many of our immigrant neighbors, who sought safety in Maine, to understand the impact of not having access to basic safety, trust, and community. Please support LD 1383.

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Sources:

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