

Rachel Gonzaga

Augusta

LD 1383

Hello, my name is Rachel Gonzaga and I am a resident of Augusta. I am here today in support of LD 1383. I plea that you vote YES on this legislation. I support this because of who I am and where I come from.

I come from Irish immigrants leaving British oppression in the early 20th century. I come from Russian Jewish immigrants leaving the pogroms at around the same time period.

I grew up in a family of Jewish and Catholic values— work hard, be kind, make the world better.

My husband is the son of a Filipino immigrant who came to the United States in the 1970s leaving martial law and a dictator.

As a teacher I have had the privilege of teaching students whose families are from Haiti, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Syria, Somalia, and so many other countries, who came to the United States to escape catastrophes and human rights abuses.

My family values are shared by so many people who have come into my life from different countries: work hard, be kind, make the world better.

We moved our family to Maine from the south because we saw this as a better place for our interracial, interfaith family. A place that has a history of tolerance, advocating for and uplifting human rights. As a teacher I was the Civil Rights Team advisor which was a project started in Maine to foster tolerance and acceptance of all identities amongst young Mainers. It's a beautiful project that was started by Steve Wessler, whose family is here today, when he worked with the Maine Attorney General's Civil Rights Division.

To me, LD 1383 is inherently "Maine." It refuses to tolerate human rights abuses. It stands for fiscal and social responsibility.

My friends and my neighbors are afraid of being abducted or killed by ICE, even those who are American citizens and born in the United States. My students are scared that they or their parents will be abducted by ICE, even those who are American citizens. I fear that my family members will be abducted by ICE, and they are all American citizens. No one, citizen or not, deserves to live in fear. No one, citizen or not, deserves to be taken. I fear for my friends' families abroad in Sudan and Palestine, for the families of my students both here and abroad.

As a teacher in Maine, I do not want my retirement to come from money that has hurt people. As a proud resident of Maine—a mother, wife, daughter, Jew, woman, I want my state to invest in humanity, not in hate. I plea that you vote YES on LD 1383.