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Portland
LD 1383

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LD 1383, An Act to Require the State to Divest Itself of Assets Invested in Corporations That Contribute to Genocide and Human Rights Abuses

Thank you to Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, and honorable members of the Committee. My name is Todd Chretien and I am here today to speak in support of LD 1383.

I was born in Bangor and both sides of my family grew up along the Androscoggin for the last four, and now five, generations. A big part of one side of my family fled Lithuania under the Tsar. And the other side came from Quebec. My great grandparents didn't speak English and my grandfather grew up speaking French at home in Livermore Falls. They all came to Maine looking for a better life for their families. Unless you're Wabanaki or your African American, there's a good chance your family came to Maine for similar reasons.

Previous generations of Chretiens and Clements and Brooks and Saunders passed along a lesson to my father and he passed it along to me. He hated bullies. He believed the most important thing in life was treating people with respect. So, if you could, your job was to stand up to a bully and not let them push around the people they were picking on. That's why I support this legislation.

What are genocide and mass detentions other than bullying taken to its logical conclusion? Our state should have no part in it, nor should we support or make any pieces of silver from companies profiting from human rights abuses.

I work as an interpreter for Spanish-speaking families in the Portland Public School district. One of my jobs now is to compile a list of how many mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, and grandparents are kidnapped by ICE. We are trying to accurately document the exact number of families broken up by these masked thugs. We are providing food for families too afraid to leave their homes. We are raising money to pay the rent and keep the lights on when the breadwinners are abducted. We are keeping track of how many kids can't go to school because their parents are afraid they'll never see them again. We are responding to our students about their trauma, talking to children about fear and grief.

For all intents and purposes, ICE is preventing effective learning this week and for the foreseeable future. Can you imagine trying to learn about fractions while you wonder if your older brother has been kidnapped from a job site? Or your mother has been detained while she's cleaning houses? Or your father has been racially profiled and grabbed by masked men? Can you imagine trying to teach kids who are worried about such things?

Please help our students learn, our teachers teach, and our community work. Divest from any company aiding and abetting or profiting from ICE contracts in any way.

Thank you,
Todd Chretien
Portland