

Lewiston Teacher
Lewiston
LD 2106

Good afternoon,

Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony in support of LD 2106. For the sake of my own safety, I am choosing to submit this anonymously. I live in Oxford County but teach in Lewiston, ME. I teach PreK-6 art, and I'm asking you both as a teacher and Mainer to support LD 2106.

Before I talk about why I support LD 2106 and why I am encouraging you to do the same, I want to tell you some stories. These stories reflect real-life experiences that I, my coworkers, and my students have gone through since ICE became active in Maine. Last Friday, I had to comfort a 5-year-old student after he got off the bus. He confided in me that multiple older students on the bus told him that "ICE was going to get him and send him to where he belongs." Just a few days later, I witnessed older students, students who had been friends prior to ICE coming to Lewiston, arguing. One student was in tears because his once friend told him that he was "clearly an illegal" and that "he can't be friends with an illegal." Since this incident, the two boys have not talked to one another. They had been friends for years before this dividing incident.

Just yesterday, one of my coworkers got a call from a man claiming to be from the Department of Homeland Security who threatened to deport her. The teacher who received this call is a born and raised Mainer/American citizen. She plans to report this incident to the attorney general's office.

The intense feelings of fear and terror regarding ICE and Maine schools do not end there. I have had students ask me, "could ICE take us from recess? Could ICE come into school? Could ICE take my mom or dad during pick up/drop off? How do we stop ICE? Would ICE kidnap us all? Would ICE shoot us all?" I have not seen students this terrified of going to and from school, as well as being school, since the mass shooting in Lewiston.

Students and staff need to feel safe at school. Students can not learn if they do not feel safe. LD 2106 would make spaces such as school safer for all. Students, families and staff do not feel safe under the current presidential administration. And rightly so. We've witnessed multiple citizens shot during interactions with ICE. I have had students as young as 3rd grade reference these shootings by name, noting that they do not want to "be shot and killed on the ground like Mr. Alex."

Under the current administration, immigration enforcement is broad and indiscriminate, targeting immigrant communities in general and creating a public health crisis that includes extreme fear and trauma, as well as actual family separation, detention in inhumane conditions, and deportation to life-threatening circumstances.

There are more than 21,000 U.S. citizen children in Maine who have at least one non-citizen parent. LD 2106 addresses the mental health and trauma crisis of mass immigration enforcement, impacting immigrant communities in Maine and beyond, including the well-being and development of children. LD 2106 protects people accessing services at these sensitive locations, as well as the people who work there. This bill is also about protecting Maine's overall workforce and economy - when parents don't feel safe sending their kids to school or leaving them at daycare, they can't go to work.

LD 2106 would provide important clarity and guidance to workers at these places that a decision has been made by Maine's state government that immigration officers are prohibited from entering these locations without a valid judicial warrant, and workers at these places are not allowed to provide voluntary consent to all immigration officers to enter.

I am submitting this written testimony because I will be busy teaching when you hold this hearing. Thursday morning, I will drive to work, wondering if I will witness a

neighbor beaten and kidnapped by ICE. When I get to work, I will anxiously ponder if one of my students will disappear without a trace. I will worry if one of my coworkers will be taken. I will wonder if I will be told that I am a "domestic terrorist" for filming ICE or worse yet, shot.

You have the power to protect children. I beg you to do so