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LD 2106

I come to you as a concerned citizen, having worked in both a daycare and after school program setting. I've worked with kids as young as three months up to fourteen years old. Regardless of the child's age, my top priority for every child is safety. If a child does not feel safe, how are they meant to grow and learn? How can we expect kids to build relationships with their peers if they are worried about their loved ones being abducted at pick up? Children should not have to worry about their parents, but the abduction of Denis Rivera Martinez at Talbot Elementary would make anyone concerned and afraid.

Kids are smart. They can sense when something is wrong or when they are unsafe, even if they can not articulate what the danger is. Many of the students I worked with at after school programming, very well understood what it means to be an immigrant and asylum seeker. But they were so much more than that. I worked with kids who were kind, intelligent, artistic, and future community leaders. Maine is lucky to host these children and foster their education. We will lose so much if they are afraid to go to school, or simply choose not to go to school at all, as we have already seen with the current ICE raids in Maine.

I also know how important Maine's breakfast and lunch program is to families, providing children meals all year, even during the summer months. If ICE is allowed access to schools, we won't just be denying children an education, we will be denying them food. To grant ICE access to schools, daycares, libraries, and hospitals is to welcome a public health crisis in our state.

Lets not forget that teachers deserve protection as well. I'm sure everyone has had a teacher that made a difference in their life. Let's pay that forward and protect our teachers, day care workers, and library staff.

A Yes for LD 2106 is a yes to education, community, and Maine's future. Thank you.