

Betsy Williams
Brunswick
LD 2106

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Betsy Williams and I live in Brunswick.

As the co-chair of the Maine UU State Action Network, I spend my days working to educate and inspire our 400+ members and 22 UU congregations to use their faith filled voices to bring love and justice to the center of our public policies.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to support LD 2106 and to thank its sponsors and this committee for moving it forward.

LD 2106 is a true emergency bill. It is exactly the kind of response we need to ICE's inhumane and unAmerican so-called "law enforcement." LD 2106 adds protection of Maine residents from unwarranted harassment and illegal detention, and protection and guidance for service workers in our public institutions who are also victims of ICE harassment.

I'd like to tell two quick personal stories that illustrate the need for this bill.

The first involves a woman from the DRC who I have tutored for the past 6 years. Three weeks ago, she was driving herself to and from work, picking her children up at school—expressing to me that she didn't think she needed to worry about ICE coming to Maine. After all she and her husband were doing everything right: they juggled their lives so both could work full time service jobs, and they annually fulfilled their obligations as asylum seekers.

Well, last week that changed—she was terrified. She showed me a picture of a handcuffed man being put into an unmarked car across the street from her workplace. She showed me an app on her phone marking ICE agents in the area, panic stricken to have to drive by them to get back to her children. Now another week has passed, and she won't go to work unless she can get a ride, her children are escorted to and from school, and she feels like a prisoner in her new home.

My other story involves an immigrant brought for treatment to the ER of a Portland area hospital. A friend of mine was a Physician's Assistant in that ER. Following HIPAA requirements, she asked the ICE agent to leave the room while she treated the patient. He refused. He also refused to leave when she offered to engage a hospital security guard, and when she offered to have him handcuff the patient to the gurney so he couldn't possibly escape. At her request, none of her superiors at the hospital were able to get this "law enforcement" agent to allow her to abide by the law. And so she had to violate her personal and professional HIPAA oath—in order to treat the patient.

No one should be so afraid of state sanctioned harassment that they can't get themselves to work. No one should be forced to violate their own professional oath to follow our privacy laws. What we are witnessing today is a disgraceful disregard of human dignity and the principles of liberty and justice that are the foundation of our country. Please do what only you can do to defend these principles: vote ought to pass on LD 2106 and enact it into state law as soon as possible. Thank you.