

Mea Tavares
Stockton Springs
LD 2106

Greetings and gratitudes to the committee, thank you for your time. My name is Mea Tavares, I am a resident of Stockton Springs where I practice as a trauma-informed bodyworker, and I am writing in support of LD 2106.

I don't know that it's possible to be a citizen of this country or of our state today without witnessing the fear that people are living in as the result of the emboldened violence of ICE agents in our communities. I lived in Portland from 2002-2018 and have deep ties there. Since the deployment of an increased number of ICE agents in the city these past few weeks, I have heard personal accounts of children afraid to go to school, parents scrambling to write care plans in case they are taken from their children, and Maine Med nurses watching their floors empty of coworkers afraid to show up to work, all out of fear of being unlawfully "disappeared" by ICE due to racial profiling, regardless of the status of their citizenship. These agents show no regard for due process or shared humanity and have been emboldened to violate every basic agreement of conduct, from permission to override the 4th amendment through forced home entry without a warrant, to public murder.

In my bodywork practice, since ICE's surge of physical and psychological violence in Maine, I have held person after person with shaking nervous systems, rapidly deteriorating mental health, and profound heartbreak about the abuses of power at the hands of ICE. When human bodies experience sustained fear, there are significant impacts to multiple body systems. Our bodies prioritize survival, directing energy away from higher order thinking, nourishment and endocrine balance and into fight or flight. When that fear is durational, there are long-lasting effects that impact individual bodies, families, communities and generations. When families risk abduction to get their children a basic education, the already present opportunity gap between children white children of positional privilege and racially diverse children, regardless of the status of their citizenship, widens. When people have to weigh the risks of getting disappeared without due process and getting medical care, the results range from greater impact on long term health outcomes, to lack of access to immediate and necessary life-saving measures.

Many of us these past few weeks have been in profound grief seeing the wide ranging impact of both terror and actual disappearances on our most vulnerable community members, and grasping at anything we can do to stop this. You, the individuals who are hearing our heartfelt pleas toward integrity and care, have the power to tangibly increase the safety of everyone in places of learning and healing, both of which have long-term impacts on public health and resilience at the levels of both the individual, and of the communities you represent. Please, I urge you to use your power in service of safety and the moral and ethical alignment of the People, and give your support to this bill.

Thank you.