

Ashley Smith
Belgrade
LD 2106

Good morning, members of the Committee.

My name is Ashley Smith and I am a resident of Belgrade, Maine. I'm here today not just to talk about policy, but to talk about the heart and soul of our Maine communities.

Right now, across our beloved state, there is a heavy cloud of anxiety hanging over our neighbors and communities. Since the current administration's shift toward indiscriminate enforcement, the "common sense" that once protected our schools and hospitals has vanished. The unspoken but sacred promise we've held in our country that certain places are off-limits to fear. These places are the schools we send our children to, the facilities that tend to our sick and dying and the places we worship and pray. These places should be sanctuaries. These are places of refuge and safety. Every person deserves to learn and to heal without fear.

I want you to imagine, for a moment, being one of the 21,000 U.S. citizen children here in Maine who has a non-citizen parent. Imagine the courage it takes for those parents to simply drive their child to school, to venture to the grocery store or even commute to work to provide for their families. What happens when a parent is too afraid to take their sick child to the hospital? It is now a public health crisis. When a parent is too afraid to take their children to school, they cannot go to work and the workforce suffers. When families become fearful of leaving their homes, the vibrancy of Maine fades.

Our state is meant to be a place of safety, not a place of pursuit. This bill is about the kind of Maine we want to live in. Do we want a state where children are traumatized in school driveways? Or do we want a state where every child—regardless of where their parents were born—can focus on their math homework instead of wondering if their mom will be there to pick them up at 3:00? When our neighbors are too afraid to leave their homes, we all lose.

LD 2106 is about mental health, economic stability, and basic human decency. It's about making sure that in Maine, our schools remain for learning and our hospitals remain for healing. LD 2106 is our chance to say that Maine will not be a silent partner in this trauma. This bill doesn't ask us to break federal law; it simply asks us to stand up for our own values. It tells our teachers, our nurses, and our librarians: "You don't have to be an arm of immigration enforcement. Your job is to teach, to heal, and to serve."

By requiring a judicial warrant for entry into non-public areas, we are restoring a boundary of dignity. We are ensuring that "voluntary consent" isn't used as a loophole to tear families apart in the very places they should feel most protected. I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass." Choose compassion over fear. Let's protect the families who call Maine home.

Thank you.