

January 29, 2026

Distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Sarah Harber, I was born in the midcoast and am a current resident of Portland. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Alcohol and Drug Counselor and I am writing in strong support of LD 2106, to protect Maine's public schools, hospitals, daycares, and libraries from ICE.

In my therapy practice, I provide regular individual counseling to Latinx and low income Mainers healing from trauma. My clients include survivors of sexual and political violence and genocide. For several months, and especially since the increase of ICE detentions in our state, I have only been able to communicate with my therapy clients via telehealth sessions. Absent from our waiting room are the families whose smiles and chatter I have come to know, the children who wobble accidentally into my therapy office. This mirrors the absence on the streets around our neighborhood, where everyone's children can usually be found teasing each other on the way to school, giggling and gossiping. The quiet is unsettling.

Most of my therapy clients do not feel safe to walk the streets they have called home. As the news from Minnesota demonstrates, they have more to be afraid of than detention or deportation: their lives are at stake. They must now choose between bringing their children to medical and dental appointments, attending school classes or risking family separation, and the potential of physical harm. I sat with a client yesterday who considered how to talk to her 6 year old about why it wasn't safe to go to school. The daily stress my clients face as a result of mass deportation efforts is impacting their mental health at an alarming rate. As a result of the financial and emotional stressors, they report a higher level of insomnia, anxiety, depression and symptoms of PTSD. As a therapist, I am acutely aware of the negative impacts of trauma on the whole family system across generations. I am concerned that the crisis we are creating will leave many children and families in emotional turmoil for the long term.

It is very important to me to place the public health needs of all the people of Maine above any extreme political agenda. LD 2106 ensures that ICE cannot enter the spaces where our communities need to access education, childcare and healthcare, spaces that keep our communities safer and healthier, and help all Mainers thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Harber
Portland, Maine

