

Testimony for LD 2106: An Act to Protect Maine's Public Schools, Hospitals, Daycares, and Libraries from ICE

Thank you to the Judiciary Committee for taking the time to read my testimony in support of LD 2106. I am sorry I am unable to present it in-person. My name is Dr. Kathryn Diamond-Falk. I have been a resident of Portland, Maine for 18 years, a mother of three children in the Portland Public Schools, and I am a practicing internal medicine and pediatrics physician. I support LD2106 as a parent, community member and professionally for the health of my patients.

This school year began with conversation at my dinner table of ICE picking up a parent at Talbot Elementary School during drop-off. My children do not attend Talbot but have attended swim lessons and many soccer practices there, and Talbot is home to our local public library, so this felt close to home. My youngest was in tears, my middle schooler said they weren't sure if it would be safe to speak up in support of a friend, and my high school student said she didn't think this would happen at Portland High School. And yet, now, less than six months later, they are all having to confront these questions again but amplified. I share these uncertainties and angst that seemed like anomaly a few months ago.

In 2019, when 400 asylum seekers found temporary housing at the Portland Expo, we opened our home to a family that had no option for housing or a hotel when the Expo needed to move people out. This family has become an extended family to mine as they continue to navigate the asylum process. This family fled their country of origin for safety amidst political persecution, traveled for months to land in a parking lot in Mexico awaiting an opportunity to present to the United States to request asylum, were bused to Portland and now do not feel safe to leave their home. We are re-traumatizing these children who have been through so much. The children and parents of this family had created fulfilling lives in the community, their schools, and working (with work permits) at a shelter to support others who have not found stable housing. ICE has disrupted all of this. Last week, my husband helped do their grocery shopping and I helped the mother switch a doctor's appointment to telehealth because she did not feel safe to leave her home.

As a physician, we are discussing how to rapidly put in motion home visits for the many patients who do not feel safe to leave their homes. This is not an efficient way to provide care and requires increased resources for already stretched clinics and hospitals. Delays in care mean that patients, both adult and children, present when they are sicker and often require additional work-up, treatment and longer hospital admissions. If we are unsure

about follow up, it may lead to patients staying in the hospital longer for treatments that could be managed at home with close follow up.

Any continued support for ICE in Maine prevents children going to school, people from presenting in-person for healthcare, and negatively impacts our workforce for important services that everyone in Maine accesses. As people are unable to work, it will quickly create a housing crisis as families are unable to pay rent and mortgages. Parents are having to weigh lack of wages and potentially not returning to their families at all versus risking persecution by ICE. Maine must pass LD2106 now to protect our community by denying ICE access to schools, daycares, libraries, and healthcare facilities without a judicial warrant. We need to reestablish the safe, supportive, healthy, thriving community that all Mainers deserve and are proud to be a part of.

Thank you for your time,

Kathryn Diamond-Falk, MD

Portland, Maine