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Testimony of Rep. Julie McCabe in support of
**LD 1259, An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the
Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Julie McCabe and I am honored to represent District 93, which is part of Lewiston.

I am testifying in support of **LD 1259, An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement**, and thank Representative Rana for bringing this critical bill forward.

This bill is a vital step towards protecting Maine people by outlawing local police departments from partnering with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency. I would like to make the case for why this issue must be handled on the state level instead of being left up to individual municipalities. I am proud to call the diverse city of Lewiston my home for the past fifteen years. However, if we do not pass this bill, my community members and many thousands across Maine, will become vulnerable to racial profiling and unlawful detention.

For those who think local police departments should be able to work with ICE on their own accord, the evidence does not support that belief. In a rural state such as ours, driving in a personal vehicle can be considered a necessity and most Mainers drive a half hour to work each way in another town than the one they call home. Under a 287(g) agreement, Maine people will potentially be subject to several other municipalities' police forces for which they have no recourse.¹ Traffic stops are the most common form of police initiated contact with the public; therefore, it's important to think about driving as the context in which potential 287(g) agreements would unfold. If we allow a patchwork of ICE partnerships in our state, no one's safety can be guaranteed.

To that end, a recent report stated that the rate of people identifying as non-white immigrants in our healthcare workforce has grown 145% over the past decade. These healthcare workers are there for us and travel around the state to meet us in our time of need. If we allow 287(g) agreements to take effect, they will be less safe. Mainers should not have to fear detainment by

¹ <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/commuting/>;
<https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/dashboards/unemployment-and-labor-force-estimates-by-city-town>

ICE when they go to work based simply on the color of their skin. However, many will because the pattern of racial profiling by ICE is regrettably well documented.²

It is clear that if we do not act now and outlaw partnerships with ICE, we risk subjecting Maine people to inhumane treatment at the hands of the federal government. Over the past two decades, thousands, including U.S. citizens, have been unlawfully detained—hundreds of miles away from their homes—without legal representation for days, months, even years on end. Lawful residents and even U.S. citizens have been sent out of the country without judicial review. Their lives uprooted, jobs upended and families shattered.³ It was not so long ago during the first Trump presidency, that 4,600 children were separated from their families at the hands of ICE. As of 2024, nearly 1,400 children remained separated from their families.⁴ One child separated from their parents is a tragedy. Thousands is a societal failure. Allowing local police departments to cooperate with ICE is reckless and wrong given their historical record of cruelty.

I will add that this should not be treated as a wedge issue to further divide the political parties or our constituents. I am the granddaughter of a Chicago police officer and have the utmost respect for the work our police officers do each day to serve our communities. But, it takes time and resources to build trust between police and local residents, the linchpin of effective community policing. Time and resources that will be siphoned away if we allow 287(g) agreements to proceed unchecked. As a state, we should seek to strengthen our local law enforcement by supporting policing that builds trust and prohibit partnerships that will only serve to erode it.

I will close by again emphasizing that the issue of banning agreements between police and the federal government is not a local issue, this is a state issue and one in which the state must lead. We must be a firewall and stop the creeping authoritarian impulses of the federal government, which disregards the checks and balances undergirding our government. We must stand up for Mainers who cannot be guaranteed of their constitutional right of due process. We must stand up for Mainers who will inevitably suffer if we do not pass this legislation.

With the greatest sense of urgency, I ask you to support LD 1259 to safeguard the Maine people.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

² <https://www.niskanencenter.org/mistaken-detainment-racial-profiling-and-discrimination-how-ice-fails-to-protect-communities/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/12/16/us-lasting-harm-family-separation-border>