

*Testimony of Bri Zhuang supporting*  
**LD 1971, An Act to Protect Workers in This State by Clarifying the Relationship of State  
and Local Law Enforcement Agencies with Federal Immigration Authorities, and 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 members of the Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1259 and 1971.

My name is Bri Zhuang, and I am the Staff Attorney and Immigration Law Teaching Fellow of the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic at the University of Maine School of Law. I grew up in Boston, where I graduated from law school exactly a year ago today. Since moving to Maine, I've been welcomed with open arms by my colleagues, our students, and the communities that we serve. My testimony today represents my personal views only and not the position of the University of Maine School of Law or the University of Maine System.

I am one of the lead attorneys on our Clinic's Immigration Detention Project, where we conduct intakes and free consults for immigrants detained by ICE in Maine. During these intakes, we interview each individual about how they were arrested or taken into ICE custody. As of today, we have met with 161 immigrants held by ICE in Cumberland County Jail in Portland and Two Bridges Regional Jail in Wiscasset.

Over the past few months, I have listened, firsthand, to dozens of accounts detailing the terror that our immigrant communities have been subjected to. Here are some of their stories:

"Alice" is a mother who endured over a year and a half of physical and mental abuse by her partner. She never called the police for help because she was afraid that they would turn her over to ICE. Her partner knew that she was afraid, and weaponized it, threatening to report her to immigration if she ever tried to call the cops on him. Then, one night, when she was trying to defend herself from his abuse, he called the police and told them that she had scratched him. Alice spent one night in jail, and the next morning, ICE was there to detain her. She has now been separated from her teenage son for three weeks, with no attorney to help her and no idea of when she will be released, if ever.

Alice's story is only one of many. There are dozens of anecdotes I can share demonstrating the dire consequences of police cooperation with ICE—the Augusta resident whom the Portland police called ICE on after a traffic stop; the Bangor father with a US citizen wife and child, that the Bangor police handed to ICE despite being in the process of getting his green card; the Portland resident, the breadwinner of his family, who was pulled over in a traffic stop and now sits in ICE custody while his family gets evicted from their home; the community college student who was dragged out of his dorm room and handed to ICE; the carpenter who was arrested and turned over to Border Patrol in Greenville while volunteering at a church; or the Houlton father who spent his daughter's fourth birthday handcuffed to a hospital bed while in ICE custody.

This is the living nightmare that immigrant Mainers will continue to experience if local law enforcement continues to divert our public safety resources to aid the federal government in its indiscriminate manhunt of our immigrant communities. I therefore urge this Committee to support legislation that protects the rights, livelihoods, and safety of our communities. Thank you and I welcome your questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bri Zhuang', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Bri Zhuang

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