

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and hard-working members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Betsy Williams and I live in Brunswick. I'd like to start today by thanking you, since I feel I haven't adequately done so in my past testimonies. Thank you for the very long hours you have spent listening respectfully to the citizens of Maine, giving everyone equal opportunity to express their opinions and beliefs. Respect, opportunity, and equal rights are all at the heart of today's bill, and I thank you again for *this* opportunity to express my strong support of LD1259.

My faith as a Unitarian Universalist compels me to speak up when the inherent worth of any human being is ignored in public policy. My faith compels me to speak up when the constitutional rights of *any* person living in the United States is disregarded. My faith compels me to speak up when those most trusted in our society give up their role as agents of justice and become, instead, agents of fear and intimidation. LD 1259 addresses all three concerns.

Over the past six years I have worked as an English tutor with four different immigrants from a variety of African countries. One became a US citizen and started her own hair braiding business in Portland. She even traveled to DC with Coastal Enterprises and other small business owners to tell her success story in a congressional hearing. Another tutee started work as an aide in a nursing home, got her CNA and is now working to pass an entrance exam to continue her nursing training at SMCC. Our hospitals are filled with people like her--hard-working immigrants willing to take essential low-level jobs to gain self-sufficiency and security for their families. Today that security is threatened, and they are frightened of the very people sworn to protect them.

I believe we can do better. We are a nation founded on Christian principles like love of neighbor which calls us to respect our differences and honor our common humanity. We are a country founded on laws, laws which our citizens agree to follow, laws which our citizens trust will be justly implemented. With agreements like those addressed in LD 1259 that trust is being undermined, not just for New Mainers, but for all Mainers. Given recent events, it's not unreasonable to ask, who might be the next targets of vengeful deportation?

Enacting LD 1259 gives Maine a chance to do all we can to strengthen relationships of trust and respect and to honor our country's founding principles. I urge you to vote OTP on LD 1259. Thank you.