

May 19th, 2025

### **Testimony in Support of LD 1259**

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Cara Oleksyk, I live in Bangor, and I am here to testify in strong support of LD 1259.

Earlier this Spring, while I was traveling in Canada, I got an alert that ICE had detained people on their way to work at Kobe, a local hibachi restaurant. I called a friend who works there— they were devastated. These were longtime coworkers and friends with families, partners, and deep roots in our community.

As a small business owner in downtown Bangor, I've seen the ripple effects of this growing fear. Customers I've come to know— creative, vibrant individuals— have told me they are moving because their family members no longer feel safe enough to leave the house. I'm hearing this from others, too: their neighbors, clients, and friends are scared to go outside, to go to work, to see a doctor, or even just to be seen.

My first job was raking blueberries as a teenager in Waldo County. That's also where I first practiced speaking Spanish outside of the classroom. I met many migrant workers that summer and was proud to sweat in the sun alongside them. Today, when I hear someone speaking Spanish, my first reaction is no longer curiosity or connection— it's fear. Not fear *of* them, but fear *for* them. I find myself wondering: is this person protected? Are they safe? Could they be next?

Programs like 287(g) don't make us safer— they make our communities more fearful and fragmented. When people are afraid to call the police, report abuse, or seek help, it doesn't protect anyone. It makes *all* of us less secure and less connected. These contracts pull local officers away from their core responsibilities, stretching already limited resources even thinner.

We also need to consider the legal and financial risks. Cities that have partnered with ICE have faced lawsuits, legal battles, and community backlash. These are burdens our municipalities cannot afford.

LD 1259 protects public trust, safety, and local priorities. Passing this bill also reaffirms Maine's commitment to local autonomy. Our law enforcement should answer to the people of Maine— not shifting federal immigration agendas.

Again, I urge you to vote in favor of LD 1259.

I also support LD 1971, which would prohibit local law enforcement from participating in federal immigration enforcement. These bills work together to keep our communities safe, united, and fair.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.