

Crystal Cron
Founding Director
Presente! Maine
ccron@presentemaine.org

Testimony in support of LD 1259 & LD 1971

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

My name is Crystal Cron and I'm the founding director of Presente! Maine, where we work to empower displaced indigenous and afro-Latinx peoples of Maine through survival programs, community power building, cultural celebration, and transformative healing practice. We provide holistic support to low-income Latine workers and families, working to bridge gaps in healthcare, nutrition, housing, safety and other basic needs, while also pushing for safer and more equitable policies and practices to meet the needs of all Maine people.

Presente! Maine urges the committee to support these bills that are about protecting Maine's values, our communities, and our public safety.

Maine's public resources should be used to serve and protect Maine communities — not to do the federal government's bidding. These agreements divert our already-limited law enforcement capacity away from protecting our communities and instead entangle local agencies in a deeply flawed federal deportation agenda. Overtime spending for police in Maine has risen nearly 30% over the last five years. Our law enforcement agencies are overburdened, under-resourced, and not trained to navigate the complexities of immigration law.

287(g) agreements make our communities less safe. When immigrants fear that any interaction with police, schools, or hospitals could result in deportation, they are less likely to report crimes, send their kids to school, or seek needed medical care. This has a chilling effect that weakens public health and public safety for everyone.

These agreements also expose local agencies to legal risk. Federal immigration enforcement has repeatedly violated constitutional protections, including due process and equal protection, which apply to *all* people in this country — regardless of immigration status. This bill protects Maine agencies from being held liable for participating in potentially illegal federal actions.

Beyond legal and moral concerns, this is an economic issue. Immigrants are a vital part of Maine's workforce and economic future. They do hard jobs, create businesses, and pay taxes. Maine is home to over 32,000 immigrant workers who contribute:

- **\$625 million** in taxes annually
- **\$1.7 billion** in spending power

- **\$205 million** to Social Security
- **\$57.9 million** to Medicare

Our largest industry, tourism, relies heavily on immigrant labor. In fact, immigrants make up nearly 10% of workers in the travel accommodation sector alone. If we want Maine to grow and thrive, we must ensure it remains a welcoming and safe place for immigrants to live, work, and contribute.

Sadly, local collaboration with ICE is already happening in our state — often targeting people who have committed no crimes and pose no threat. We've seen:

- A 17-year-old minor detained on his way to work with his uncle.
- An asylum seeker detained after a routine traffic stop in Kennebec County.
- Three people handed over to ICE by Maine State Police following a car accident investigation in Eustis.

These are not isolated incidents. They represent a pattern of misuse of local resources for a federal agenda that is out of step with Maine's values.

287(g) agreements are costly, ineffective, and harmful. They violate constitutional protections, worsen racial profiling, erode public safety, and threaten the health of our communities.

We have a choice: Use Maine's limited resources to build safer, healthier, more united communities — or allow ourselves to be co-opted into a failed deportation machine.

I urge you to support this legislation and keep Maine a place where everyone can live without fear and with equal access to justice.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to building a stronger, safer Maine for everyone.