

Thank you, honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, for this opportunity.

I am here to testify in support of LD 1259 and LD 1971.

The ICE partnership programs effectively turn local and state law enforcement officials into ICE agents. Even without these partnerships, ICE already has access to jails and prisons in Maine to interrogate people about their citizenship status, and all fingerprints of people arrested by state and local police are submitted to the Department of Homeland Security where they are checked against immigration databases.

Why would we want our state and local law enforcement agencies to do the job of ICE? You will hear testimony from others about how these agreements will cost our local governments money, strain our local resources and increase liability.

I will speak about the moral cost to our humanity.

As an older white woman, it is unlikely that I will get stopped for driving a few miles over the speed limit, or for any one of many minor traffic violations. And if I do get stopped, I'll get a warning or at worst, a citation.

For Black and brown people in this country, including here in Maine, the stakes are so much higher. Even without ICE cooperation, racial profiling is a fact of life in these United States, with Black and brown people pulled over on the slightest pretext, or no pretext at all.

But if your state or local police agency enters into an agreement with ICE, racial profiling becomes even more widespread. Instead of concentrating on people who actually pose serious threats to public safety, these law enforcement officers now have the power to act based on who they think belongs – or doesn't belong – in this country. That is not supposed to be their job.

If a woman has any concerns about her immigration status, she will not call 911 if she is a victim of domestic violence. If anyone in your family has immigration issues, you will not want to call for help for any reason, such as a mental health crisis or another emergency.

Today, ICE arrests, detentions and deportation are being pushed beyond the legal limits. Students who protest against Israel's genocide in Gaza are being stripped of their visas and even those with green cards are not safe. People are being sent across the country to ICE detention centers in Louisiana and Texas, far from their lawyers and families, to jurisdictions that are more likely to go along with the Trump administration.

Even more horrific, detainees are being sent to a mega-prison in El Salvador and the president of El Salvador is ready to build more of these hell-holes to take even more. These places are so horrifying that they defy imagination.

Mahmoud Khalil, a Columbia graduate student and green card holder, wrote from his cell in an ICE prison in Louisiana. He noted that while the government prosecutes his case “at breakneck speed” to make an example of him and criminalize free speech about Gaza, many of the men he is locked up with “have been languishing for months or YEARS waiting for their “due process.”

For now, ICE will continue on its path, breaking up families and locking up innocent people who pose no threat to anyone. Our government will continue to deny due process and send people to prisons thousands of miles away to face God knows what horrors, until we the people recognize our power to stop that.

In the meantime, we do not have to cooperate or be complicit. We don't have to help them do that job. No human being is illegal.

Please vote OUGHT TO PASS on LD 1259 and LD 1971. Thank you.

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