

My name is Jessie Mathieson and I am a resident of Stockton Springs.

I am writing today to testify in favor of the bills LD 1259 and LD 1971.

I have been horrified by the illegal and inhumane actions of ICE and the Department of Homeland Security.

I was born and raised in Maine. I am married to an immigrant. We met when I was studying abroad and fell in love. Love is not defined by borders. Family is not defined by borders. When I moved back home and started caring for my disabled brother who had been abused and neglected in state run homes, my partner committed to helping me. We went through almost five years of immigration processes and spent thousands of dollars so my partner could care for a disabled citizen of this country. This is what immigrants do, care for their families, support our communities and give back to this country.

Now we see people with the same status as my husband being kidnapped by the state with the help of local law enforcement. It horrifies me that the taxes we pay are going to local law enforcement to tear apart families like ours, families that just want to care for one another and live in peace. Families that have already gone through rigorous processes and intense hardships to be with one another.

The other day I watched a mother in Massachusetts be torn away from her 16-year-old daughter and baby. The 16-year-old became distressed and was violently arrested. The 16-year-old's screams have haunted me. How could anyone tear apart a family? How are my local law enforcement, who are funded by my taxes, allowed to commit this kind of violence.

I am here to show the people in this room, people with the power to define these kinds of relationships, that every member of our community is valuable and we have a responsibility to protect the immigrants who live here. The federal government is acting extra-judiciously and it is up to local bodies like you all before me, to protect us from the encroachment on our constitutional rights.

States have a level of autonomy in this country and our state has been targeted and bullied by a man who thinks he is above the law. We cannot let the unlawful and inhumane actions of this administration harm our local communities.