

Monday, May 19, 2025

Good Afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, other esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Kenney Miller, I'm a resident of Rockland, ME, father of two, and concerned community member, among other things. And I'm here to urge you to support LD 1259 and LD 1971, to secure the safety of our communities and our constitutional rights.

In the Midcoast area, as throughout other parts of Maine and the U.S., we have been dealing with a spate of abductions of immigrants, many with legal status. Not infrequently these are facilitated by the local police who we are supposed to trust with protecting our communities. I have heard on multiple occasions that local law enforcement cannot enforce immigration law. Which I understand to be broadly true. But beyond that the issue is not just about enforcement, it's about collaboration and facilitation.

According to the Immigrant Legal Resource Center "Over the last decade, 70-75% of ICE arrests in the interior of the U.S. have been handoffs from another law enforcement agency" Often these are for small insignificant offenses, like traffic stops. In Lewiston, Jose Herrera, a 17-year-old on his way to his first day of work with his uncle. In Waldo County, an uncle who came to pick up his nephew after a traffic stop and was subsequently arrested. And just a couple of weeks ago in Rockport a 38 year old stopped for an expired inspection sticker. And these are just the ones we know about. These are not criminals. They may have missed a stop sign, or been going to fast, or had expired tags. But who among us has not? What would have been a slap on the wrist for you or me became a life-defining tragedy for these families.

These events distract from the more important work that our law enforcement should be doing. They damage the relationship between law enforcement and the public, reversing the progress of community-based policing. And they make our communities less safe as a result. Afterall, would you report a crime to somebody you feared would haul you away instead?

LD 1259 and LD 1971 protect our communities from Federal overreach. They protect us from these violations. They prevent the co-optation of local law enforcement. And they protect local law enforcement from coercion. I know of at least one local law enforcement official who reportedly received hate mail and death threats for declaring that it was their job to protect all the residents of their jurisdiction. So these laws protect them as well.

On a personal note, as I mentioned earlier, I am a father of two. As most parents do, I strive to teach them to treat others respectfully and with kindness. But of equal importance I strive to teach them courage, to stand up for what is right, to stand up for kindness, even when it is difficult. That's part of what brings me here today. Because I want my kids see that when we marshal out collective power we can triumph over bullies.

With these bills, you have the opportunity to act with courage to stand up for what's right. Because when we forfeit our collective power to bullies it makes them stronger, and us weaker. They don't stop with calling you a name, they proceed to shoving you against the locker, to stealing your lunch money, then to beating you up. Conciliation does not work.

There's a meme that I came across recently that stuck with me. Meme's are after all the font of modern wisdom. It was a play on the poem by Pastor Martin Niemoller, a German theologian sent to a concentration camp for opposing the Nazis. I suspect we're all familiar with it.. "First they came for ... and I did not speak out ... because I was not a ..." Except here the author played on the recursive nature of art and history. "First they came for the immigrants..." they wrote, "and I did something because I've read the poem".

Learn from history. Be courageous AND kind. Support these bills.

Sincerely,
Kenney Miller