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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Representative Nina Milliken in support of
**LD 1259, An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the
Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement**
and
**LD 1971, An Act to Protect Workers in This State by Clarifying the
Relationship of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies with Federal
Immigration Authorities**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and friends and colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Nina Milliken and I proudly represent the communities of Blue Hill, Brooksville, Castine, Sedgwick, Surry and Trenton. I am here today to speak in heartfelt support of LD 1259 and LD 1971.

As some of you heard the other day on the House floor, I speak fluent Spanish. I grew up in a community with numerous immigrants and many of my friends and neighbors were born in other nations throughout Latin America. My childhood home was filled with both Spanish speaking and English speaking. My life was deeply enriched by this exposure. I went to college and got a degree in Latin American and Latino Studies and spent a good deal of time in Nicaragua while attending university. I wrote my thesis (in Spanish) on violence against women in immigrant communities and the challenges that face immigrant women when they are victims of domestic and sexual violence. The quick summary of that research is that when people are afraid to report to the police for fear of being deported or even fear of being victims of racial profiling, they tend to not report.

I also happened to be in college when the state of Arizona passed SB 1070, a “show me your papers” law which opened the door to deeply harmful racial profiling by police. The law was ultimately struck down by the courts but not before intense harm was inflicted on thousands of people. Many immigrant people left the state of Arizona. School counselors reported a large uptick in students needing more support. Arizona’s economy was harmed. The tourism industry in the state took a beating. Healthcare costs went up. There were even whispers of reinstating a

program similar to the Bracero Program to accommodate the losses in the state. In case folks don't know, the Bracero Program brought farmworkers to the United States from Mexico during World War II to work the fields while American men were fighting overseas.

Think about that.

Following passage of a bill presumably to rid the state of immigrants, the state considered bringing workers from Mexico into the state to fill in the gaps left by scared immigrant communities fleeing Arizona.

A los comunidades inmigrantes por el estado, espero que saben que tienen apoyo aquí en este edificio. Les amamos. Les queremos estar seguros y sabemos que no están seguros si la policía en Maine están trabajando por la migra. Yo y muchos de mis compadres estamos luchando fuerte contra la injusticia que está pasando por todo este país.

We are all made less safe when our law enforcement is expected to work as agents for federal law enforcement for immigration purposes. Maine should heed the cautionary tale from Arizona and learn from other states' past mistakes. Please support these bills to help eliminate the chilling effect that federal immigration enforcement has already had upon Maine, its economy and its people.