

My name is Ashlynn Ward. I am a registered nurse working in labor and delivery at Eastern Maine Medical Center and I'm a member of the Maine State Nurses Association. MSNA represents over 4,000 registered nurses and direct care workers in Maine. On behalf of myself and my union, I ask for your vote to pass this critical emergency legislation as rapidly as possible, with the strongest possible protections for our patients and workplaces.

Nurses make it our mission to care for and save human lives. We are outraged by the ongoing, unchecked violence of immigration agents across the country. Immigration enforcement agencies pose a dire public health threat to all our communities.

This time, they horrifically executed one of our fellow nurses, Alex Pretti, who saved veterans' lives as an intensive care unit RN for the Veterans Health Administration. Alex was fulfilling his call as a nurse by protecting his community from ICE violence, terror, and lawlessness.

As we speak, immigration agents are flooding the streets of Maine, detaining, intimidating, and terrorizing members of our community. These agents intimidate everyday people from going about their lives, whether that's taking their kids to school, going to work, or coming to our hospitals. Fear of ICE keeps people from seeking medical care, turning manageable health issues into emergencies and allowing disease to spread unchecked. That is not an unintended consequence; it is a predictable outcome. Agencies that terrorize communities into avoiding medical care are actively fueling a public health crisis-and the consequences will be measured in preventable suffering, overwhelming our already overwhelmed hospitals, and lost lives.

As nurses, our priority is our patients. Our hospitals are places where people go to be healed, to be cared for, to feel safe as they focus on getting well. But ICE's current campaign of violence and terror makes us fear—and expect—dangerous, inhumane actions by immigration enforcement agents in our health facilities. ICE agents are acting with unconditional authority, disregarding traditional safe havens. Nurses need this bill to protect our patients and ourselves from ICE violence in our facilities.

This bill would require hospitals, like the one where I work, to exercise their constitutional right to keep ICE out of private areas without a warrant. It would protect nurses from having to stand up to armed agents by setting a clear statewide policy of keeping immigration enforcement out of private patient care areas and requiring health care facilities to issue procedures to handle demands for entry or information. Nurses need this bill to protect our patients, our coworkers, and our lives.

As nurses, we have a duty to our patients, to help them heal, without discrimination and right now, we need your help. We ask for your support for this important legislation.