

Good afternoon,

My name is Breeana Blalock, I am a mother, clinical social worker, registered voter, and refugee resettlement administrator here in the state of Maine.

I am testifying in support of LD2106. Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement presence in the state of Maine has made thousands of immigrant children, families and individuals I work with and know personally feel unsafe, alone and fearful to leave their homes for school, work, medical appointments, and obtaining basic necessities like toilet paper, food, diapers, and medications. I want to say thank you to the sponsor and co-sponsors of this bill for acknowledging the harm ICE agents are causing and one action that we can do to minimize harm and prevent trauma. For those who did not cosponsor this bill, step up, honor your commitment to ALL mainers and vote to protect the innocence of children, the importance of attachment, and human rights of education, healthcare and security.

In my child's and my living room we have a poster created by the War Resisters League. It says "Kid's Learn What They Live." Think on that more than anything I might share.

A few days ago, my child's day care provider reached out to us parents to provide impact testimony and I said yes immediately. A few hours later I thought, written testimony cannot convey the anger, empathy, heartbreak and the terror. I have many privileges to come in person to present my testimony and to speak for those who cannot safely share how federal ICE presence is impacting them. Let us look around this room and see who is not here and who will continue to be most impacted if LD2106 does not pass. Lets be real and acknowledge why black and brown folks are not here in larger numbers.

Two days ago an immigrant led organization in Lewiston cancelled a dental clinic they have in partnership with a dental hygienist clinic with over a dozen appointments because no one felt safe to attend. These are children and adults who have pain, cavities, severe oral health problems who have not received dental care in years who are further suffering in pain because they

fear being targeted by ICE and detained. It is traumatic as a parent to witness your child be in pain and having to make the unnecessary and preventable choice to prioritize safety over healthcare.

I know what trauma looks like. I have worked with folks with traumatic experiences for over 15 years as a Behavioral Health Clinician and Social Worker. Many have diagnoses of post traumatic stress disorder, but what our immigrant neighbors, colleagues, partners, and friends are experiencing right now is continuous traumatic stress disorder. This is devastating and preventable.

I will end with this again “Kid’s Learn What They Live.” If we allow healthcare settings to not protect patients from racist targeting and move from places of safety and accessing wellness, children will learn to fear healthcare providers and believe they are not worthy of healthcare. If we allow libraries to be rampaged and attacked, the beauty of children’s imaginations and creativity will be silenced. And if we allow violent and inhumane ICE agents into childcare centers, children will learn they do not deserve security, love and a right to education. Remember our similarities and shared value of wanting the best for kids and ALL families in Maine. Let’s show immigrant kids and their families that we can reach across political divides to keep them safer. Thank you, Breeana Blalock