

Testimony in Support of LD 2106, "An Act to Prohibit the Disclosure of Nonpublic Records Without Proper Judicial Review"

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January 29, 2026

Carney!
Good afternoon, Senator ~~Moonen~~, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Karin Leuthy and I'm the Director of Public Engagement for the Maine Center on Economic Policy. I also serve as an appointed commissioner for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. I'm here to testify in support of LD 2106, "An Act to Prohibit the Disclosure of Nonpublic Records Without Proper Judicial Review" because MECEP knows that Mainers deserve to feel safe at their schools, hospitals, libraries and day care centers – and that when they don't, the economy suffers.

I was recently talking to an immigrant friend who has authorization to work in Maine. He told me that ICE showed up at the hospital where he works and arrested people who were waiting for appointments. He told me he wasn't able to go to work the next day because he was "stressed and traumatized." He said, "This is not the USA I dreamed of, Karin. I didn't know that in a single day you could even be afraid to turn on your own TV just because you're afraid that the light from the TV will give you the impression that there's someone inside."

This is not the USA most of us dream of – or recognize, either. Across the state, there are reports of people afraid to leave their homes to go to work, send their kids to school, or even go to the grocery store. It's hurting them and it's hurting our economy.

Students at Portland schools are staying home because they're worried about ICE agents. Districtwide, around 10 percent of students were absent recently beyond the normal rate. In some schools the rate was as high as one in three.^a We know that when kids miss school, especially for prolonged periods of time, their opportunities are reduced later in life, and our state as a whole is poorer.

Health care centers face a double threat. Patients who don't show up for appointments and employees who can't come in to work cost hospitals money. Hospitals in Maine are already seeing higher than usual numbers of workers calling out.^b Even their non-immigrant coworkers are being harassed by federal agents.^c Immigrants are more likely to work in the health care sector than other parts of the economy, and this is particularly true for home health aides. Almost one in ten were born overseas.^d

For patients, missed appointments mean delayed treatment, worse health over the long run, and potentially higher hospital bills if a key condition hasn't been diagnosed in time.

Businesses of all kinds are suffering. Half the staff at Maine-based manufacturer American Roots are immigrants, and the company is "spending tens of thousands of dollars" and enlisting volunteers to help its workers.^e One in nine small business owners in Maine are immigrants. Immigrant owners and workers generate \$3 billion of economic activity each year in Maine.^f If just 10% of them stay home or close their business out of fear, that's almost \$6 million every week in lost economic activity.

Maine can't preempt federal law, and we can't completely restrict federal agents' activities, but we can require them to prove their reason for entering sensitive locations. If they are truly engaged in targeted operations, this shouldn't be an obstacle for them. But it will give Mainers a sense of security in these everyday activities.

I urge you to vote "ought to pass." Thank you, and I'll be happy to take any questions.

Notes

^a Riley Board, "Maine schools react to increased ICE enforcement." *Portland Press Herald*. Jan 27, 2026. <https://www.pressherald.com/2026/01/27/we-will-need-to-continue-to-rely-on-each-other-maine-schools-react-to-increased-ice-enforcement-2/>

^b Bonnie Bishop, "MaineHealth seeing 'higher than usual call-outs' amid increased ICE operations." *WMTW*. Jan 22, 2026. <https://www.wmtw.com/article/mainehhealth-seeing-higher-than-usual-call-outs-amid-increased-ice-operations/70099951>

^c "Nurses condemn chaotic, unlawful ICE invasion of Maine." *National Nurses United*. Jan 22, 2026. <https://www.nationalnursesunited.org/press/nurses-condemn-chaotic-unlawful-ice-invasion-of-maine>

^d MECEP analysis of US Census Bureau, American Community Survey data, 2020-2024

^e Patty Wight, "Westbrook community members form a human wall to keep local workers safe from ICE." *Maine Public*. Jan 26, 2026. <https://www.mainepublic.org/maine/2026-01-26/how-a-westbrook-business-and-community-members-are-trying-to-keep-workers-safe-from-ice>

^f "Immigrants Are A Vital Part Of Maine's Future" *Immigration Research Institute*. <https://immresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/IRI-EPI-One-PagerME.pdf>