



Maine County Commissioners Association

4 Gabriel Drive, Suite 2 Augusta, ME 04330, 207-623-4697
www.mainecounties.org

April 25, 2025

Sen. Carney, Chair
Rep. Kuhn, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: ***Testimony of MCCA regarding LD 1656, An Act to Facilitate Compliance with Federal Immigration Law by State and Local Government Entities***

Chair Carney, Chair Kuhn, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

On behalf of the Maine County Commissioners Association, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to this Committee in ***opposition*** to LD 1656. While we recognize that there are likely to be strongly-held opinions on either side of this bill, we do not believe it is appropriate for state government to determine whether a local government authority may cooperate with the federal government related to immigration enforcement. This should be a local decision, not a mandated state decision.

About MCCA. Briefly, the Maine County Commissioners Association was established in 1890 to assist Maine's county government in providing vital services to Maine citizens in a responsive, efficient, and credible manner. The Association is based in Augusta, represents all 16 of Maine's counties, and is governed by a board with representation from each participating county.

What does LD 1656 do? LD 1656 prohibits state and local government entities in Maine from adopting or enforcing policies that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities in a range of areas. It also requires these state and local government authorities to comply with federal requests for information or assistance related to immigration enforcement.

Discussion. MCCA represents all 16 counties in Maine, each of which operates with a unique governance structure and diverse community needs. For this reason, we believe it is critical to preserve the ability of each county to make decisions that best reflect the priorities and public safety considerations of their residents.

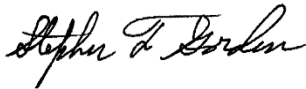
Counties in Maine routinely engage in a variety of partnerships — including with state and federal entities — to serve their communities. In some cases, county law enforcement may be asked to coordinate or cooperate with federal authorities on matters involving immigration, particularly when public safety is at stake. When such situations arise, MCCA believes the decision of whether and how to engage must remain a **local determination**, responsive to the facts on the ground and the needs of the community.

Maine's counties rely on flexibility in how they contract and collaborate, and any effort to mandate or restrict these decisions should be carefully considered to avoid unintended consequences. We appreciate that this bill seeks to provide guidance and structure regarding compliance with federal law, and we respectfully urge the Committee to consider how such measures may intersect with county-level autonomy and operational discretion.

Local law enforcement agencies are best positioned to determine how to enforce the law within their jurisdictions. Local law enforcement agencies are charged with enforcing the law in their jurisdiction, and they are sworn to enforce the law fairly. Sometimes that requires local law enforcement agencies to engage in activities related to immigration. At the same time, if a local law enforcement agency is asked to engage in behavior that is not consistent with the law, whether related to immigration or some other activity, those local agencies already have in place the tools and responsibility to refuse such requests.

Conclusion. For the reasons noted above, we urge the Committee to reject LD 1656. If you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephen Gorden
Co-Chair, Legislative Policy Committee, MCCA



Jean-Marie Caterina
Co-Chair, Legislative Policy Committee, MCCA

cc: Commissioner Andre Cushing, President, MCCA
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, MCCA Legislative Counsel