

## **Barbara D. Acosta, PhD**

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary.

My name is Barbara Acosta and I live in Trenton. I urge you to vote YES on LD 1259, and this testimony mirrors another I am writing in favor of LD 1971.

I hold a doctoral degree in Education, and I worked for over 30 years conducting research and evaluation on issues related to equitable educational programs and services for students who are learning English for school. In addition, my children's father is an immigrant, and we have many family members who are immigrants. Unless you are indigenous, then each of you (like me) most likely descended from immigrants who came to the United States seeking a better life.

My relatives and most of the families I have worked with throughout my career immigrated to this country to escape war, oppression, and violence. The fearmongering about immigrants currently being tossed around by both political parties is based on untruths and runs counter to evidence. Most studies (e.g., Cato Institute, 2017; National Academy of Sciences, 2017) show that immigrants (both legal and undocumented) are less likely to commit crimes than native-born U.S. citizens.

Immigrants contribute to Maine's economy by starting businesses and helping to fill labor shortages in key industries like blueberry picking, wreath-making, construction, healthcare, and tech. Without immigrants, Maine's healthcare and eldercare industries will face even greater staffing shortages than they already do. In the town of Bar Harbor, many of the workers who would have come from overseas to work in the tourism industry during the summer may now be too frightened to do so.

Finally, it is generally a bad idea to mix federal immigration law enforcement with local and state law enforcement. If immigrants (especially undocumented ones) fear deportation, they may avoid reporting crimes, cooperating with investigations, or serving as witnesses. This can also lead to weakened policing, particularly in communities with high immigrant populations, because when trust is lost our communities become harder to police. I hope we can all agree that it keeps everyone safer when community members feel they can approach the police without fear if they are victims of a crime or have witnessed a crime.

For all of these reasons, we need to keep federal immigration enforcement and local and state law enforcement separate so that our state will continue to thrive economically and socially and to remain safe in our communities. I urge you to vote YES

on both LD 1259 and LD 1971.

Sincerely,

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