

Emma Cipriani
Lewiston
LD 1259

Good afternoon honorable members of the judiciary committee,

My name is Emma Cipriani, I live in Lewiston and I am here to testify in favor of LD 1259.

I wanted to testify because I am seeing firsthand every day the impact that this climate of fear of increased detention and deportation is having on our community- a climate that will only be amplified if 287 G agreements are allowed to continue.

I see the fear in my professional capacity as a Community Resource Coordinator with a local non-profit. Our organization fights stigma surrounding substance use disorder and mental health within immigrant & BIPOC communities and helps connect them with mental health and recovery services.

We have been seeing a lot less people coming to community education workshops or seeking help and support for their substance use because of fear of detention or deportation. People are afraid to be in public spaces because of the risk.

This means more people affected by mental health and substance use issues are suffering and not getting the help they need- which leads to effects that are bad for everyone.

Allowing local law enforcement to engage in immigration enforcement activities will only serve to heighten this climate of fear and to drive a further wedge between police officers and their communities- the people they have sworn to protect and defend.

This loss of trust would not only be a tragic catastrophe for our immigrant and refugee community members' safety and well-being, but it would also be terrible for the safety and well-being of every Maine resident.

It would obviously make immigrants even less likely to seek help if they are victims of a crime- but it would also make it almost impossible for them to come forward as witnesses or to share information with local law enforcement- which will only make problems like gun violence and drug use in our communities much, much worse.

I think legislators from both sides of the isle can agree that it is so important for all community members to be able to work alongside local police officers to help protect our communities- not mistrust and fear them. I GAURENTEE THAT WILL NOT HAPPEN in towns with 287 G agreements with federal immigration agencies. MAKING local law Enforcement officer's jobs HARDER not EASIER.

I want to also make it clear that most of the immigrant populations I serve are NOT undocumented. They have come here through LEGAL means- being usually refugees or asylees that have been granted TPS but are STILL afraid because they are STILL at risk. For example immigrants Haiti or Sudan have had their TPS unilaterally revoked under the Trump Administration but- even before they can plead their case (Because they have sometimes lived here for years and have made lives here) can apparently be detained and deported even for appearing for their immigration hearings. Is this right, is this fair?

I will finish by briefly reminding the honorable members of this committee of contributions immigrants make to Maine. (Benefits that far outweigh any alleged harm),

We are the state with the most aging population IN THE COUNTRY.

In 2024 Maine experienced a natural population DECREASE (more deaths than births) but this was offset by immigration- resulting in a population INCREASE overall.

We are experiencing a labor shortage- we need immigrants in our State.

Immigrants are workers, business owners, consumers and clients- economic drivers for Maine.

Why are we trying to shoot ourselves in the foot?

Please don't allow the federal government agencies to supersede what is best for our state. Please support bill LD 1259