

Judith Feinstein
Hallowell
LD 1971

To: Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee
Re: LD 1259: An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement
and

LD 1971: An Act to Protect Workers in This State by Clarifying the Relationship of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies with Federal Immigration Authorities
Date of Public Hearing: May 19, 2025

My name is Judith Feinstein. I live in Hallowell, and I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 1259 and LD 1971.

In 2017, I was a member of a volunteer family mentor team with the Capitol Area New Mainers Project (CANMP) in Augusta. The family I worked with had come from Afghanistan in late 2016 and was resettled here. They included a mother and seven children, ranging then in age from about eight to 19-year-old twins. They were brought here as refugees and came to us with nothing. They did well in school, they played on school sports teams, they learned English quickly, and the older ones found part-time jobs. Those children are now all young adults. The family moved to Portland and although I haven't seen them in years, I have thought about them often. One of the last things I knew about them is that they were applying for green cards. They had legal immigration status. Now, I hear about immigrants and our New Mainers being detained by ICE, kept from communicating with their families, or moved out of state. I am horrified by what I see, distressed that it's happening here in Maine, and worried that any of these seven young people – or their mother – might be among those caught up in an irrational and overwrought reaction driven by Federal immigration policies.

Immigration processes are not perfect, but that doesn't justify presuming criminal conduct by immigrants, detaining and then deporting them without due process. I do not want to see local law enforcement agencies being effectively commandeered by ICE and Homeland Security. Absent a verifiable threat to public safety, local police officers should not be partnering in ICE activities. I do not support local law enforcement effectively being tuned into ICE agents through 287(g) partnerships. LD 1259 would make it illegal for any Maine law enforcement agency to enter into a 287(g) agreement and carry out federal immigration enforcement actions on behalf of ICE. These agreements undermine public safety by decreasing trust in local law enforcement. They strain local resources, which are already stressed. They require our local police to carry out actions they are not trained to do and can turn any routine encounter into a potential deportation risk. In particular, I find this frightening and morally objectionable.

LD 1971 provides clear boundaries that prevent local and state resources from being caught up in federal operations and helps ensure that Maine's law enforcement agencies serve all residents. It clearly defines the role of Maine law enforcement and state employees. It ensures local officers focus on local priorities and maintains the trust communities need to keep everyone safe. Protecting our residents benefits everyone.

Thank you for your consideration. Please support the provisions of LDs 1259 and 1971.