

Carol Kalajainen  
Brunswick, Maine  
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Esteemed Members of the  
Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee in written form.

My name is Carol Kalajainen, I live in Brunswick, Maine, and I am writing today as the vice-chair of MidCoast New Mainers Group, a small nonprofit which seeks to empower immigrants as they rebuild their lives. I am writing to you in strong **support** of LD 1259, An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Mainer by Defining the Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement.

LD 1259 would make it illegal for any Maine law enforcement agency to enter into agreements like the 287(g) agreement and carry out federal immigration enforcement actions on behalf of ICE. LD 1259 encourages community safety which protects the most vulnerable in our community and prevents resources from being moved away from serious crime investigation.

I have seen that when asylum seekers and refugees arrive in our area, they are afraid of the police. They are in the US because their own government, including the police, were unable to protect them from real and credible threats to themselves and their families. They had to flee their own countries to keep themselves and their families safe. It takes some time and effort for immigrants to learn and trust that the job of the police in the US is to protect the public and keep residents safe.

Isn't this what we tell our own children - the police are your friends, they are community helpers? Allowing local law enforcement to enter into agreements with ICE, turns the police into something they were not intended to be for law-abiding residents: a threat.

Deputizing local police to carry out federal immigration enforcement turns every routine encounter into a potential deportation risk. The 287(g) program impacts people with **no criminal history** through minor traffic offenses, including unpaid parking tickets.

What is the result? The result is fear, not cooperation. It means that people are afraid to go to public places or to send their children to school. Public safety involves residents being able to call the police when there is

something wrong, whether that is domestic violence or unsafe working conditions. Fear makes everyone less safe.

Additionally, local resources are strained and drained through the 287(g) agreement by moving local resources away from the investigation of serious crimes and other state and local police responsibilities. Our law enforcement agencies are already spread thin. They already have plenty to do.

Immigration enforcement doesn't just affect people without legal status, US citizens and lawful residents are being detained - and some deported - impacting their families and workplaces. Fear spreads through their communities.

The immigrants I know and work with came to the US to have a safe place to live, work, and raise their families. They are vital to the economy of our communities, working in cafes, senior citizen residences, big-box stores, schools, and hospitals. They have goals to become nurses, teachers, or business owners. They are contributing to making Maine a good place to live.

I am a person of deep Christian faith. My faith tradition compels me to treat all who reside in my country, state, and city with justice and compassion, including immigrants, who are the "strangers within our gates" to quote the Old Testament. Christianity is not the only value system to hold this to be true. Many other religious and non-religious people hold to the same moral value - treat all with justice, love, and compassion.

Please don't turn our communities into places filled with racial profiling, fractured families, wrongful detention, rising policing costs, and fear. Let's work together to continue creating communities of trust and safety, where all can ask for help, work, and live without fear.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote **Ought to Pass on LC 1259.**

Thank you.