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brunswick
LD 1259

My name is Meredith, and I am testifying in favor of both LD 1259 and LD 1971.

I occupy an extremely privileged position as a Canadian immigrant and permanent resident. My parents came here to work when I was very young, and despite the fact that I do not hold citizenship, I have only rarely had to deal with the inherent injustices of ICE, DHS, or border patrol.

My father once told me that, given enough practice and knowledge, you can read in the rock record human as well as geologic history. Stratification of earth can indicate periods of plenty, famine, plague, war, social upheaval, and the times of migration, both forced and voluntary, that have marked human history forever.

Since 2002, the United States has used ICE to reinforce an already intense national personality of isolationism and xenophobia. The intensely public and unjust treatment of migrants, particularly non-white migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, has embedded itself in American society. Atrocities become news briefly and exit public conversation just as quickly: Haitian migrants whipped at the border, children in cages, a teenager vanished into Cumberland County's own prison system--these seem to have been either celebrated or accepted as an unfortunate consequence of simply being in America.

I hope you have heard, and continue to hear, the myriad of material arguments against the increasing powers being handed over to ICE: the fact that immigrant labor, however poorly rewarded, drives much of Maine and the US's economy and production; the fact that crime rates amongst immigrant populations--regardless of citizen status--are consistently lower than those amongst citizens; the shared indigenous communities and cultures that cross both US borders north and south; the fact that our country is often responsible, in whole or in part, for the violence and chaos driving people into it.

Now I would like to remind you again of the simple ethics of the matter: to punish people for movement, and to create from them a class of people we are 'allowed' to abandon and abuse, is against every virtue this state claims to represent. It is foolish, pointless, selfish, and cruel. Even if you considering these bills never have to witness the consequences of ICE's abuses, they will be memorialized forever, in families, in communities, in the earth, and in the historical record. The choices we have made will not be forgotten; we have the chance to make better ones for the future.