

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Today I write to urge you to support LD 1259 and move it forward in the process toward full approval. I am writing as a concerned resident of Wells ME, the only municipality in the state that has enacted a 287g contract with I.C.E. I have never given public testimony before but because of the Wells Police Department's decision to take on federal immigration enforcement responsibilities, I felt it important to share my experience so that the negative consequences that we are already experiencing here in Wells do not have to be endured by other communities.

I have always had respect for the Wells Police Department and have sincere appreciation for the work that they do to keep our community safe. My concern is not with the integrity of the police department, but with how this agreement has already negatively impacted our community and placed a dark cloud over the reputation and welcoming nature of this wonderful town.

Others are much more knowledgeable than I about issues of due process with respect to current immigration enforcement practices, as well as the financial and liability burdens that local towns take on when carrying out I.C.E.'s duties. I am more aware of how this contract is straining relationships within our town, and how it is taking time away from the important work of addressing and responding to vital community needs.

In my experience, the 287g agreement in Wells is challenging the harmony in our community, and weakening public trust in those whose job it is to serve us. Since this agreement came to the attention of residents, the Wells Police Chief and one of her Captains have spent hours each day for weeks fielding citizens' deep concerns about the WPD's partnership with I.C.E. Town Officials, including the Town Manager and Select Board, have likewise devoted hours of time hearing from residents with credible misgivings and clearly stated oppositions. Rather than assuaging public concerns, the time spent by the Police and elected officials, time that could be contributing to the greater wellbeing of the community, has widened public disapproval, and revealed more potential pitfalls with the I.C.E. contract.

Choosing to partner with I.C.E. has already done harm to the relationship between the Wells police and the people they are committed to serve. Residents' concerns about safety have deepened, public trust in the police has decreased, and the peaceful nature of our friendly little town has been disrupted.

We all benefit when local police do the job they were hired to do (local law enforcement and community service), and when community resources are reserved for addressing community needs. LD1259 will ensure that the mission and resources of our local police departments remain local.

Mary Marra Wells Maine