

To the chairs and members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.

I write in support of LD 1259, An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement. This bill would protect our communities as a whole, and in particular those of us who are from abroad and those of us who are in local law enforcement. Immigrants in Maine, almost all of whom are naturalized citizens or have one or another immigrant status or are applying for it, are living in terror right now because federal ICE agents are rounding up immigrants and citizens related to immigrants, denying them due process, and deporting them to unspeakable foreign prisons or to homelands they fear to return to. To involve Maine law enforcement officers in these actions would have several terrible effects. First, it would increase the risk and terror for people who are already afraid to go to work, send their children to school, attend religious services, and go about the lives. Then, it would break down whatever trust our police departments have built with immigrant families and communities—something that is always hard to achieve. In my community of Lewiston, it has been difficult enough in recent years for immigrants to believe that they can turn to the police for protection and frustrating for the police relying on the immigrant communities to help them in their investigations of crimes. To make the police collaborate with ICE would end any willingness of immigrants to cooperate with them, and that would undermine the ability of the police to solve crimes and protect not just the immigrants, but the community as a whole. Finally, federal courts including the Supreme Court have found that ICE practices violate the U.S. Constitution by denying people due process of law in the course of imprisoning or deporting them, and the Trump administration resists complying with court orders to reverse those ICE practices. We in Maine need to protect our local and state officers from engaging in illegal and unconstitutional actions, and facing the legal consequences of those actions, by partnering with that federal agency.