

Louise Rocha-McCarthy
South Portland
LD 1259

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Louise Rocha-McCarthy and I am a resident of South Portland testifying on behalf of LD 1259. I have worked as an interpreter for the police, the courts, lawyers, Maine Medical Center, Catholic Charities and the Portland Public Schools beginning in 1998. Due to ill health, I am semi-retired now but still keep up with events and I am very concerned about the prospect of local police working with ICE. Immigration law is complex, requiring training and education that most police don't have. It's as different from general criminal law as neurology is from primary care. Your average patrolman had enough on their plates handling domestic violence, shootings, thefts, intoxications and other daily occurrences. Contrary to some popular opinion, most immigrants, especially the undocumented, just want to work hard and send money home to needy family members. They don't want to draw attention to themselves. As in any population, there are some bad actors among them, but if the police work for ICE, no one is going to tip off the police when they need to solve a crime.

In fact, it's obvious from the current mistakes already made by ICE, that their officers aren't particularly well trained either. Deporting US citizens, sending legal residents to a maximum security prison in El Salvador after admitting and administrative error that sent them there and still refusing a court order to return them, does not bode well for our police officers, let alone our state. Deporting US citizens, locking up Canadian tourists in detention centers for weeks on end with no means of contacting families, deporting criminals before they are tried, these are not the actions of an agency that cooperates with law enforcement. These are the actions of an agency run wild with few restraints and a sense of overriding entitlement.

There may not be court cases now, but there will be in future. It opens Maine up to potential future litigation and personal injury claims running into the millions. Morality and ethics aside, we taxpayers will ultimately be stuck with those bills. Six European countries have issued travel advisories to their citizens about coming to the US. Canada has done the same. According to the Press Herald, Canadian tourism is down 25%. I know Maine faces a budget shortfall, but this is no way to fill the gap. Lastly, Maine falls within the 100 mile rule. Anywhere in Maine is within 100 miles from the border. ICE doesn't need our help. They can already board trains and buses without a warrant.

In short, I urge you to vote in favor of LD 1259. Thank you for your time, I'm happy to answer any questions that you have.