

Testimony in Support of LD 1259: An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the Relationship Between Local and Federal Law Enforcement

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Megan Smith. I live in Milford, and I'm writing today in strong support of LD 1259.

This bill is essential to protecting the rights, safety, and dignity of everyone who calls Maine home. It upholds a simple but vital principle: Maine's public safety systems should serve our communities—not federal immigration agencies.

LD 1259 would prohibit Maine law enforcement from entering into 287(g) agreements with ICE. These agreements effectively deputize local officers as immigration agents. That's a mistake. Immigration law is highly complex, and local officers are neither trained nor equipped to enforce it. Tasking them with this responsibility only increases the risk of legal violations, undermines public trust, and wastes already limited resources.

Let me be clear: this bill protects ALL of us.

In recent years, we've seen the harmful consequences of blurring the line between local policing and federal immigration enforcement. Across Maine and the country, individuals—including minors, asylum seekers, legal residents, and even U.S. citizens—have been detained by ICE during routine traffic stops, on college campuses, and at mandatory immigration check-ins. These individuals pose no danger to our communities. They are our friends, coworkers, classmates, and neighbors—people who help our communities thrive—every single day.

Even more troubling is the rise of masked ICE agents arresting people without judicial warrants—actions that amount to abductions in broad daylight. These agents often rely on racial profiling, operate without oversight, and sidestep due process. That should terrify all of us—because no one should be detained without cause, accountability, or a court order. These practices are not just morally wrong—they're dangerous. They erode trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement. When people fear that calling the police could lead to deportation, they're far less likely to report crimes, testify, or seek help. Public safety depends on trust. These agreements destroy it.

287(g) agreements also place an unfair burden on local agencies already stretched to the limit. Overtime costs for law enforcement in Maine have risen nearly 30% in the last five years. We cannot afford to divert local officers from their core duties to carry out federal immigration enforcement. That's not their job—and it shouldn't be.

Finally, these agreements expose our towns and counties to legal and financial risk. Federal immigration enforcement has a long record of civil rights violations. When local

police participate in those violations, they inherit that liability. LD 1259 protects both our communities and our law enforcement from those consequences.

Immigrants are not outsiders. They are an integral part of Maine's past, present, and future. They work hard, raise families, start businesses, and pay taxes. They are the people we see at church, at school games, in our hospitals and grocery stores. Maine is stronger, safer, and more vibrant because of them.

Please vote in favor of LD 1259. Let's keep Maine a place where rights are respected, communities are safe, and public safety serves *everyone*. I also urge your support for LD 1971, which shares the goal of upholding justice and protecting the rights of all Mainers.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Respectfully,

Megan Smith
Milford