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Portland, Maine

May 19, 2025

Senator Anne Carney
Representative Amy Kuhn
Committee on the Judiciary
State House Room 438
Augusta, ME 04330

Submitted online

Re: Support for LD 1971, An Act to Protect Workers in This State by Clarifying the Relationship of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies with Federal Immigration Authorities and LD 1259, An Act to Enhance Public Safety in Maine by Defining the Relationship between Local and Federal Law Enforcement

Dear Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Beth Stickney. I am a resident of Portland, an immigration lawyer, and was the founding executive director of both the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP) and the former Maine Business Immigration Coalition. In addition, in 2009, the Maine Legislature enacted 25 M.R.S. Ch. 355. That law established an *Advisory Committee on Bias-Based Profiling by Law Enforcement Officers and Law Enforcement Agencies*, on which I served during its first year.

I am unable to attend today's hearing but want to express my strong support for both LD 1971 and LD 1259 because both bills aim to ensure that Maine's state, county and local police do not formally or informally assume the role of federal immigration agents. When they do so even informally, it results in increased bias-based profiling, particularly of people of color, increased distrust of law enforcement by immigrants and their U.S. citizen family members, and decreased public safety when members of Maine's communities are afraid to report crimes or come forward as witnesses. This is not speculation – I have already seen this happen.

While I was at ILAP, after the terrorist attacks on 9/11/2001, Maine saw an exponential increase in bias-based profiling by Maine State Police, county sheriff deputies, and local police throughout the state where State, county or local police asked the individuals for their immigration papers with no legal basis to do so. We kept a database of apparent profiling incidents that were reported to us where our clients were asked about their immigration status, being very conservative in what we classified as profiling. Just a few examples of the many cases of apparent profiling we recorded included those triggered by pretextual traffic stops such as:

- The Latina woman stopped for running a yellow, not a red, light.
- The Southeast Asian man stopped for turning right on red, at an intersection where right on red is allowed (no ticket was issued).
- The Latina woman stopped for having a Madonna figure, no bigger than the ubiquitous pine tree air fresheners, hanging from her rearview mirror.

- The South Asian tourist stopped driving down Ogunquit's main street, for no apparent reason (no ticket was issued).
- The African commercial truck driver taking a nap in the cab of his truck at a rest stop (no ticket was issued).

Just a few examples not related to immigrant drivers:

- The Latino summer tourist from Boston eating ice cream with friends on a sidewalk bench in Rockland, who saw a patrol car drive by that came back to stop and ask for his immigration papers.
- The Latino window-washing crew working on a U.Maine-Farmington building stopped by police and asked for their immigration papers while working. Though legally here, they were forced to spend an entire weekend in a county jail awaiting confirmation of their legal status by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.
- The Latino broccoli workers in The County who, during a Sunday day-off, were having a cookout in their front yard, whom police drove by and then returned and stopped to ask for their immigration papers.
- The Latino farmworkers in the back seat of the farmer's car when he was pulled over for speeding, who were asked for their immigration papers, while neither the farmer nor his wife, both white, were.
- The Latino construction workers staying in a motel in Brewer whom police stopped to question and ask for immigration papers when they were standing talking in the motel's parking lot after returning from dinner at a restaurant.

When immigrants are profiled and asked for their immigration status, news of that treatment travels widely and fast in their communities. Many immigrants live in mixed status families comprised of U.S. citizens and immigrants with temporary status, or even without legal status, often due to the high fees and complicated immigration procedures making permanent residency seem beyond reach. U.S. citizens and immigrants alike become afraid of reporting crimes or coming forward as witnesses due to fears that state and local police may question and misunderstand their immigration status, and lead to separated families. **Most immigration law violations are civil, not criminal law violations.** Contrary to being "good law enforcement", when state, county, and local police tread into the immigration sphere, it jeopardizes local communities' public safety, and squanders law enforcement resources better spent on protecting communities from local crimes.

Moreover, Maine needs a vibrant workforce if the state is to be competitive and have a strong economic future. Immigrants to Maine are key to our state's population growth and our ability to stem the state's workforce shrinkage, as recognized in the [Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029](#). When state, county and local police engage in profiling and immigration enforcement, even informally, immigrants increasingly will see Maine as hostile territory and will be less willing to stay in or move to Maine.

Recognizing immigrants' importance to Maine's economy, in 2021 over 100 Maine businesses, chambers of commerce, trade associations, and higher education institutions signed the [Maine Compact on Immigration](#) urging state leaders to "adopt policies and practices to help Maine become a destination of choice for immigrants to the U.S. and that provide an environment where immigrants can reach their full potential in our state." To that end, **Compact** (attached) signatories affirmed:

*We support a federal immigration enforcement strategy that emphasizes public safety, targets serious crime, safeguards witnesses and victims, keeps families together whenever possible, and considers the interests of and unintended consequences to businesses, the workforce, and communities. **Local law enforcement resources should focus on criminal activities, not on civil violations of federal code.*** (Bold added).

Reportedly, since the new federal administration has increased immigration detentions, immigrants in Maine are already leaving the state due to fears of contact with ICE or Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Since February 2025, ICE and CBP have detained even immigrants who have committed no crimes and who have pending asylum applications or temporary statuses and valid work permits and who are perfectly legally in the U.S. and in Maine. Many of those recently detained were referred to ICE or CBP by state, county or local police, typically encountered during a real or pretextual traffic infraction. For Maine's immigrants, other states with far larger populations of immigrants and people of color may seem to be safer places to live.

While I was still at ILAP, to improve public safety, ILAP and other allied organizations worked for passage of an ordinance in Portland preventing Portland Police officers from asking immigration status except in extremely limited circumstances. The ordinance passed in 2003 with then-Chief Michael Chitwood's support, because he understood the distrust created when officers ask about immigration status, and the damage that distrust causes in maintaining public safety. We also worked with Governor John Baldacci, who issued an executive order in April 2004 similarly preventing State Police from making immigration status inquiries in most circumstances. That executive order regarding the State Police was later rescinded.

Maine needs policies preventing state, county and local police from overreaching and engaging in largely civil immigration enforcement that are durable and apply to every corner of the state. Executive orders can be rescinded quickly and with little process. Sound policies to both protect public safety and keep Maine a welcoming destination for immigrants should apply statewide, not just in some communities.

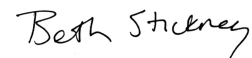
LD 1971 sets detailed limits on Maine law enforcement officials statewide to restrain them from venturing into immigration enforcement, either by official policy or by actions of individual law enforcement officers. And LD 1259 prevents law enforcement entities in Maine from entering into agreements with the Department of Homeland Security, such as so-called INA §287(g) agreements (8 U.S.C. §1357(g)), that would essentially deputize local law enforcement entities as federal immigration agents, with minimal training (three months training, with no formal, federally funded ongoing training is not nearly enough for anyone to understand the myriad legal statuses and

complexities of federal immigration laws), which have been proven to result in increased bias-based profiling and distrust of state, county and local police.

LD 1971 and LD 1259 will help Maine be a state where there is equity and justice for all who live here, or indeed, are just passing through as temporary workers or tourists. Maine's economy will also benefit if the state is seen as one where *all* people can live safely and without fear of law enforcement encounters based on profiling.

I urge you to vote to pass both LD 1971 and LD 1259.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Stickney".

Beth Stickney, Esq.



MAINE COMPACT on IMMIGRATION

The **Maine Compact on Immigration** is a bipartisan initiative by members of Maine's business community and higher education institutions to promote immigration policies that will strengthen our economy and communities, attract and retain global talent, and bring new entrepreneurs, businesses and workers to our nation and state. The Compact's principles reflect the signatories' vision of commonsense and future-focused federal immigration reforms that reaffirm the country's commitment to remaining a nation that welcomes immigrants, and that address the realities of our state's and nation's workforce needs and demographic challenges. These principles also affirm the signatories' support for state and local policies and practices that recognize the myriad economic contributions immigrants make as volunteers, consumers, students, workers, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, and civically engaged citizens, strengthening Maine's communities and economy.

We urge Maine's congressional delegation and state leaders to adopt the principles of the Maine Compact on Immigration to guide the immigration discussion in our state. Furthermore, we encourage state and local leaders to follow suit with policies, practices and programs that create welcoming communities in Maine.

Maine Compact on Immigration Principles:

- 1. FEDERAL SOLUTIONS:** Immigration policy is a federal issue with profound impact on states and the economy. We urge Maine's congressional delegation to lead aggressive efforts to enact immigration reforms that update and vastly improve our nation's outdated immigration system, protect our borders while preserving due process and human rights, and facilitate trade. Maine will thrive with a federal immigration system that is flexible enough to address the needs of businesses, while protecting the interests of both foreign-born and native-born workers.
- 2. STRENGTHENING OUR ECONOMY & WORKFORCE:** For our state economy to grow and compete, Maine needs a robust workforce and policies that prioritize attracting and retaining global talent. This necessitates a federal immigration system that is both responsive to, and effective at, meeting the demands of Maine's economy and the sectors that drive growth in our state. We also call on state leaders to adopt policies and practices to help Maine become a destination of choice for immigrants to the U.S. and that provide an environment where immigrants can reach their full potential in our state.
- 3. FAMILY:** Strong families are critical to developing successful individuals and cohesive communities. Federal immigration policies should prioritize keeping families together in order to ensure the most supportive home environments for all children in our country and across our state.
- 4. A COMMONSENSE APPROACH:** Immigrants have always been, and remain, an important part of our communities. We must adopt a commonsense approach to immigration that reflects our long-established values and recognizes the critical role that immigration has played in the history, culture, and economy of both our state and the nation. Federal immigration policies must provide

sensible and fair paths forward for immigrants wishing to come to the U.S. to find opportunity and to work, to join their immediate families, and to seek refuge from persecution. Our immigration laws must also include a path towards citizenship for those already here who lack legal status and who are of good character, pay taxes, and are committed to becoming fully participating members of our society and culture.

- 5. EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT:** We support a federal immigration enforcement strategy that emphasizes public safety, targets serious crime, safeguards witnesses and victims, keeps families together whenever possible, and considers the interests of and unintended consequences to businesses, the workforce, and communities. Local law enforcement resources should focus on criminal activities, not on civil violations of federal code.
- 6. STRONG COMMUNITIES:** Communities that grow and attract talent are the ones that are welcoming to all. We support state and local policies, practices and programs that provide a welcoming environment for immigrants and offer all residents the tools and opportunities they need to succeed.

Signatories

Adele Masengo Designs	Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences	Eastern Maine Development Corporation
American Roots	Bowdoin College	Educate Maine
Androscoggin Bank	C. Love Cookie Project/ C. Love Baking School	Fisherman's Net
Associated General Contractors of Maine	Cabot7	Focus Maine
Austin Street Brewery	Cambium	Fogtown Brewing Co.
Axiom	Catama Productions	Geiger
Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce	Central Maine Power	Goodwill Industries of Northern New England
Bangor Savings Bank	Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI)	Gorham Savings Bank
Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce	Coffee by Design	Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center
Bates College	Colby College	GWI (Great Works Internet)
Bernstein Shur	Common Census	Hancock Lumber
BerryDunn	Community Concepts Finance Corporation	Home Care & Hospice Alliance of Maine
Biddeford-Saco Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Dead River	Hospitality Maine

Hussey Seating	MaineHealth	Sebasco Harbor Resort
IntWork, LLC	Mandy Levine Consulting, LLC	ShipRight
Jasper Wyman & Sons	Manufacturers Association of Maine	Southern Midcoast Chamber of Commerce
Lee Auto Malls	MEMIC	Spurwink
Lee International	Northern Light Health	St.Germain
Lewiston-Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce	ON Semiconductor	St. Joseph's College
Live and Work in Maine	Orono Brewing	Street and Co., LLC
Lucro Management	Pan Tim Wood Products	The Jackson Laboratory
Luke's Lobster	Penobscot Community Health Care	Thomas College
Maine Beer Company	Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce	Tilson
Maine Business Immigration Coalition (MeBIC)	Portland Yacht Services	tkc.io
Maine Center for Entrepreneurs	Preti Flaherty	TRSS Wealth Management
Maine College of Art	ProSearch	Tyson / Barber Foods
Maine Community Action Partnership	Rainbow Construction, Inc.	Union River Lobster Pot
Maine Dairy Industry Association	Ready Seafood	Unum Group
Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association	Retail Association of Maine	Valico Group
Maine Health Care Association	Revision Energy	Verrill Dana
Maine State Chamber of Commerce	Rising Tide Brewing Co.	VETRO FiberMap
Maine Stream Finance	Rosemont Market & Bakery	WEX
Maine Tourism Association	RSC Consulting	Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine
	Sappi North America	