

We strongly urge legislators to approve LD 1259 and LD 1971. There have been countless examples of immigrants being assaulted, detained and/or arrested by ICE agents or by unidentifiable men and women playing the part of ICE agents. These apprehensions are marked by excessive force, coercion, and violence. The people, mostly men, carrying out these apprehensions are too often unprofessional, disrespectful, and unnecessarily aggressive and punitive. They cover their faces with masks, do not wear uniforms and badges, and fail both to show a judicial warrant and apprise detainees of their rights. Worse still, immigrants have been sent to prison in the U.S. and in El Salvador without due process, a foundational Constitutional right upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court more than once. These unlawful apprehensions must end, and Maine law enforcement agencies should be banned from cooperating.

It has been said that “there is no right way to do a wrong thing.” History will judge this period as being characterized by unjust and unlawful renditions and deportations, and Mainers should remember our proud history of independent thinking and action. In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Act compelled people in all states to return escaped enslaved people to their enslavers. Maine refused. In 1852 and 1857, Maine passed laws to protect people who broke the Fugitive Slave Act. Today, a president of the United States has created a pretense of war with Venezuela to detain immigrants who do not have documentation and those who do. He expects to increase the budget for immigration law enforcement by 60 billion dollars, and he may call on the National Guard to provide troops for further immigration enforcement.

Please support LD 1259 and LD 1971 to give Maine law enforcement agencies a clear direction.