

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

My name is Brigitte West. I am a resident of Warren, writing to testify in strong **SUPPORT** of both LD 1971 and LD 1259; they would provide much-needed explicit and detailed policy to ensure state law officials' time and resources are directed **only** toward their intended local duties, **not** being deputized as federal immigration agents (with little to no training).

Unfortunately, these Bills are especially vital under the current federal administration. We have now repeatedly witnessed federal powers blatantly ignoring core values of the Constitution. According to the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, all United States residents-- whether they be citizens, non-citizens, immigrants, or undocumented individuals-- are entitled to Due Process. And yet, there are weekly reports of U.S. residents, with all types of citizenship and residency status, being rounded up and "disappeared" by federal agents. People like Mahmoud Khalil and Rumeysa Ozturk, arrested for political reasons in violation of their right to free speech and denied due process for weeks, or the 200 Venezuelan immigrants deported to El Salvador's max-security gang prison in defiance of a court order banning federal officials from doing so. These are only a few of the most-reported cases. There are thousands more that have not made headlines. We must not ignore these flagrant violations of the Constitution, or fail to name them as what they signal: Fascism. If history has taught us anything, we must ensure that every opportunity to resist authoritarian overstep is taken. Passing these Bills is one such opportunity to avoid complicity in unconstitutional actions, while legally protecting local and state law officials who refuse to cooperate with federal agencies from any possible Trump administration attempts at retribution.

Immigrants are vital to Maine's economy and increasing cultural diversity. Growing up in Portland in the '90s and '00s, I had friends and classmates whose families were refugees from Cambodia and Somalia, and my family sponsored a family who had fled the war in Bosnia. I also had friends from Pakistan who came here for higher education, am neighbors with people from Jamaica and Puerto Rico who work seasonal agricultural jobs, and know people from Mexico who are in-demand roofers...the list goes on! I feel so grateful and proud that Mainers, despite struggles with xenophobia and racism, continue to work toward a Maine that is a safe haven and place of opportunity for everyone. If Maine wants to continue to be seen as a welcoming place for **all people**, we must concentrate on expanding policies that make communities safer, policies like LD 1971 and LD 1259. Most immigration law violations are civil, not criminal violations (contrary to the inflammatory rhetoric and falsehoods issued by the federal administration). Violations are often due to high legal fees, complex immigration procedures (and frequent changes to procedures), or language barriers. Statistics have repeatedly shown that a harsher response to immigration (and biased profiling) leads to people being less likely to report local crime due to fear of their citizenship/residency status being questioned.

If state and local police become synonymous with ICE, it will more likely harm local communities' safety, spending resources that could be better directed to protecting communities

from actual risks like drug trafficking, domestic violence, etc. To ensure a bright future for Maine, and to protect our country's democracy, I urge you to **SUPPORT** bills LD 1971 and 1259.

Thank you.

Brigitte West
Warren
LD 1259

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