



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF EAST MILLINOCKET

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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To the Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I write in respectful support of LD 2106 with the urging that an amendment be made to include houses of worship.

Over the past several months, my congregation has engaged in prayerful and thoughtful discernment about how we would respond if Immigration and Customs Enforcement were to arrive at our place of worship. This planning has never been undertaken with the intent to conceal individuals, evade the law, or interfere with lawful enforcement. Rather, our concern has been—and remains—the safety, dignity, and spiritual well-being of those who gather for worship.

For people of faith, the church is not merely a building or meeting place. It is sacred space, set apart for reverence, prayer, and the worship of Almighty God. Scripture consistently teaches that God's house is to be treated with holiness and respect. When armed law-enforcement officers enter a worship service—particularly while wearing masks or visibly carrying weapons—the nature of that sacred space is fundamentally altered. People enter worship seeking to encounter God, confess sin, receive grace, and find peace for their souls. A visible display of force during worship is deeply unsettling and, for many congregants, frightening. It is inconsistent with the reverent atmosphere necessary for the worship of Christ, the Prince of Peace.

My congregation includes children, middle-aged adults, seniors, and individuals who carry deep personal trauma, including some who have fled violence or persecution in their past. The presence or threat of enforcement action during a worship service undermines both physical safety and spiritual trust, discouraging attendance and participation in religious life.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ commands His Church to “go and make disciples of all nations,” baptizing and teaching in His name. Weekly corporate worship is central to fulfilling this Great Commission. When people fear that worship services may be interrupted by enforcement actions, the church’s ability to faithfully carry out its God-given mission is compromised.

LD 2106 with the proposed amendment will affirm a long-standing principle recognized throughout American history: that houses of worship should be treated with particular care and restraint by governing authorities. This legislation does not place churches or other houses of worship above the law, nor does it weaken immigration enforcement. Rather, it protects the free exercise of religion by ensuring that worship services are not disrupted by armed enforcement actions except under the most necessary circumstances proven through a judicial warrant.

The members of my church believe in the rule of law, strong borders, and the fair enforcement of our nation’s immigration laws. This request is simple and limited: that churches be allowed to gather for worship without fear, intimidation, or disruption, so that believers may freely practice their faith as guaranteed by the Constitution.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support LD 2106 with the proposed amendment as a prudent, balanced measure that protects religious liberty, public safety, and the sanctity of our sacred space.

Thank you for your time, careful consideration, and service to the people of Maine.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Forrest Gentner
First Congregational Church of East Millinocket