

My name is Jacque Kutvirt. I live in Brunswick and am a science teacher at a public high school in Portland. I attended the hearing today, but was not able to stay due to childcare needs at home! I am writing in strong support of LD 2106 An Act to Prohibit the Disclosure of Nonpublic Records Without Proper Judicial Review, a bill that will protect Maine's public schools, hospitals, daycares, and libraries from ICE. I showed up specifically to speak about the impact of immigration enforcement on schools because schools are what I know and the students I serve are where my heart is. I am able to be here today because I am currently on parental leave. Soon, I will have two children in public schools in Maine. I am hopeful to amplify the voices of educators statewide and also to speak to you today as a parent.

My colleagues are showing up to school every day to teach in classrooms where many seats are empty. Let me say that again, many school children in Maine, black and brown children, are not showing up to school. This is one of the chilling effects of the current immigration enforcement operation underway here in Maine. At the school where I teach, this week a colleague had 5 out of 13 of her students in attendance. Another friend and colleague at an adult education center had one student left in attendance. Yet another friend and colleague in a public pre-school in South Portland explained that she now has an all white class. As a teacher, this is heartbreaking. We, teachers, dedicate our life's work to creating spaces where all of our students can learn. To have empty seats is truly devastating. And as a parent, I cannot even imagine how painful it would feel to tell my children that they have to stay home because school is not safe. We are in crisis mode at schools and in family life.

I urge you to please support LD 2106 and restore the longstanding and commonsense policy — which prior to this current presidential term, stood for decades across Democratic and Republican administrations. This was legislation that used to ensure that all people could access crucial public services and meet basic human needs without fear.

The crisis is not only playing out in our classrooms where students' seats are empty, but also at home where each student is isolated and likely experiencing extreme levels of stress. This is unfolding as I speak. LD 2106 will address the mental health and trauma crisis of this mass immigration enforcement. The well-being of children is at stake.

As parents it is our job to ensure our children's safety. I can't imagine the fear that our immigrant parents are experiencing when they have to negotiate whether or not they can bring their child to school. Today, I ask you to ensure a child's access to public education without the threat of detention and deportation.

In addition to ensuring safe and equitable access to public education, this bill would not pose any significant impediment to the enforcement of laws that keep us safe. No one suffers from having an asylum-seeker in your classroom, but having ICE invade a school would be traumatic for the community. To be clear, these policies do not pose any significant impediment to local law enforcement's role within our schools. This is about ensuring public health and safety for all students.

Finally, schools are often the foundational gathering places of the community, and one of the only places where people from all walks of life are together consistently. It is my belief that protecting these spaces from violence and fear is essential if we want to build a thriving society.

I implore you to support LD 2106. Please take this one, small step to protect all of our children. All children in Maine deserve to go to school free of fear.