

Laurent Gilbert, Sr.
Lewiston

Distinguished members of the Committee on State and Local Government

My name is Laurent F. Gilbert, Sr. I have served in government my entire adult life. I worked my way up through the ranks to chief of police for the City of Lewiston during the last five of my twenty-five years on the department.

I served as the United States Marshal for the District of Maine for eight years. This was followed by five years as the Associate Director of the Maine Policing Institute at the University of Maine at Augusta.

I culminated my career in government as the mayor of the City of Lewiston for five years.

I wish to testify in strong opposition to LD 1340, An Act to Ensure Municipal Compliance with Federal Immigration Laws.

I see this bill as a remedy in search of a problem.

In order for a local police department to serve its community, it has to establish trust so that the residents will feel comfortable in reporting crimes committed against themselves or others. We do not need residents to fear the police regardless of their immigration status.

Police need to encourage the reporting of crimes in order to keep a community safe. States have entrusted local control to municipal officials to develop policies that work best for their communities. It has and continues to work well.

I'm a firm believer in the Community Oriented Policing Philosophy. It takes a community to solve community problems. This means that no one is left behind and participation needs to be encouraged to solve such community problems. We lose that when residents are reluctant to get involved in solving their crime problems.

State and local police train their officers against racial profiling. To question someone's immigration status, perhaps because of color or accent is contrary to such training. To do so, could very well be a racial profiling crime.

State and local governments are responsible for training of its law enforcement officers.

Immigration laws are complex. Without such training, states and municipalities would be subject to lawsuits for their lack of responsibility for training in those complex immigration laws. That is the work of the federal government and it is their responsibility to provide such costly training to their federal officers.

I see the remedy for a violation of this proposed statute as simply outrageous!

As I said in the beginning, I see this proposed statute as a remedy in search of a problem. In my view there is no problem. I urge all of you to kill this bill immediately in committee.