

Kelly Merrill  
Skowhegan, De-ICE Maine

Dear Chairs Sen. Joseph Baldacci and Rep. Ann Matlack, and members of the Committee:

My name is Kelly Merrill, and I'm a community organizer, activist, journalist, and the mother of a Latinx child, here today to oppose LD 1340.

I was reading this bill, so I could explain it to others, and I found myself just incredulous. I said to myself, am I really understanding this correctly?

What it is that Representative Greenwood is proposing, is to punish municipalities for refusing to cooperate with an agency responsible for countless human rights' abuses, by taking funding away from their schools; abuses such as:

Physical and psychological torture.

Extremes in temperature.

Forced feedings.

Forced hysterectomies.

Rape.

This bill punishes those municipalities that have the audacity to exercise their right to "home rule" by taking measures to protect themselves from the dictates of agencies that cause active terror among our communities. What troubles me almost as much is that Representative Greenwood must feel justified in threatening general assistance to the kids in our communities by forcing municipalities to cooperate with a racist, rogue agency.

Home rule is what protects us from institutions like Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and from people who support the harm they visit upon refugees, migrants, and immigrants. Of course municipalities should refuse to cooperate with an organization responsible for innumerable, documented human rights abuses; one that operates with impunity, without transparency, accountability, or oversight.

That I'm spending my energy opposing this bill, this ridiculously racist bill, is disheartening. It makes me wonder how much more suffering we will willfully visit upon the members of our society who grow and pick our food, maintain our homes, and care for our children and elders.

Besides being morally reprehensible, this bill presents a danger to public safety. When people cannot call emergency services, we are all unsafe. When people cannot report a crime, serve as witnesses, or go to court for fear of being picked off by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, we all suffer.

The very presence of ICE is oppressive and terrifying, and we must resist their presence in our state. LD 1340 proposes to further systematize racism. I urge you to oppose it.