

LD 1383 Divest Maine from ICE and Genocide

Hello Council Members. Thank you for allowing time to hear my testimony. My name is Nicole Benoit and I am a York County resident. I am a Muslim women who works as an advocate for survivors of sexual assault in Cumberland and York County. As someone who works in the community and lives in Maine, LD 1383 is incredibly important to me. I say this both from a moral and a sustainability standpoint. I have seen a large amount of funding pulled from community needs and the needs of survivors of trafficking and then poured into destructive and violent systems.

950,000 dollars was pulled from supporting survivors of trafficking this year. Support that includes housing, clothing, and cell phone service, all things that a person needs to be able to find legal work. Instead millions have been poured into ICE, providing weapons of mass destruction to foreign countries, and even providing police the equipment to bulldoze tents and encampments of the unhoused.

I was raised to understand the importance of voting in this country. I remember my Mom and Dad picking me up after school and bringing me with them to the ballots on voting days. My parents were politically active, but not necessarily loud. I was taught the importance of seeking different paths to having your voice heard. My Mom would often remind me that we vote everyday with our wallets as well as at the ballots. We choose what our morals are by where we are willing to put our money. The current investments have made it loud and clear that we are perfectly comfortable criminalizing survival, that the “right to live” is something that can be bought. I assure you this spending is as immoral as it sounds and it is not sustainable.

I am sending my testimony to say it is high time we reverse the destructive nature of our investments. It is time to divest from ICE and the weapons being used to commit genocide and put it back into our community. Divest from the violence and invest in productive communities. To quote the comedian Josh Johnson “ this is not a question of legality, this is a question of morality.” Today it is a child in Gaza dying from hypothermia, but tomorrow that could just as easily be the person who was once your neighbor. What will you say when that reality isn’t on your screen, but staring you directly in the eyes? Because you can be assured that an investment in destruction will never stay contained to “them over there”. This is why it is not sustainable to continue with “funding as usual”. If you do not divert funds now, you will see it in your own backyard and you have already provided the monetary consent for the destruction that will follow.

Thank you.

Nicole Benoit
Sanford
LD 1383

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