



May 3, 2021

**Testimony of Julia Brown, Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Opposing LD 1340**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and distinguished members of Committee On State and Local Government, thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong opposition of LD 1340.

My name is Julia Brown, and I am the Advocacy and Outreach Director at the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP). ILAP is Maine's only statewide nonprofit provider of immigration law and related legal aid to Maine's low-income residents. Each year, ILAP serves over 3,000 individuals statewide, coming from approximately 100 countries around the world. On behalf of ILAP, I ask the Committee to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 1340, otherwise known as "An Act To Ensure Municipal Compliance with Federal Immigration Laws."

Prohibiting municipalities from forbidding their employees from inquiring about an individual's immigration status encourages racial profiling, because those officials will often base their inquiry about a person's immigration status on race or country of origin. 94 percent of ILAP's clients are people of color and are subject to systemic racism as well as anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy. Through our work, we have heard many reports that suggest racial profiling was involved in law enforcement encounters with members of the immigrant community. We have also seen many cases where individuals of color were arrested and detained by ICE after traffic stops for minor infractions or when no reason was provided. By threatening to take away state funding from municipalities that direct police to not inquire about immigration status, LD 1340 would essentially be state-sanctioned racial profiling.

Separating local policing from immigration enforcement strengthens public safety. Immigration status is irrelevant to local law enforcement, and many law enforcement agencies recognize that immigrants play a vital role in creating safe communities. When local police entangle themselves in federal immigration enforcement, it creates fear and distrust. LD 1340 could dissuade many noncitizen Maine residents from reporting criminal activity – including domestic violence, sexual assault or labor and sex trafficking. Laws like LD 1340 also prevent US citizen family members and friends from contacting local law enforcement out of fear of jeopardizing their noncitizen family member's or friend's safety. Such a chilling effect would impede local and state law enforcement from being able to enforce Maine's criminal laws. LD 1340 aims to turn every law enforcement officer into an ICE agent and would have dangerous consequences and a negative effect on public safety.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote "ought not to pass" on LD 1340. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and the opportunity to speak with you today.