



# Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

Testimony of Whitney Parrish

Maine Women's Lobby

In opposition to LD 1449

An Act to Facilitate Compliance with Federal Immigration Law by State and Local  
Government Entities

May 22, 2019

Senator Carpenter, Representative Bailey, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary: my name is Whitney Parrish, Director of Policy and Program for the Maine Women's Lobby. The Maine Women's Lobby is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide membership organization devoted to raising the economic, social, and political status of Maine's 678,000 women and girls.

I am here to speak to you in opposition of *An Act to Facilitate Compliance with Federal Immigration Law by State and Local Government Entities*.

This bill capitalizes on anti-immigrant fervor and makes immigrants less welcome in Maine. This bill amounts to racial profiling by singling out people perceived to be "foreign" for different treatment, and it puts the safety of Maine's women living in immigrant communities at substantial risk.

As we described at the hearings for LDs 366 and 1833, Maine Women's Lobby knows well that every single day, women across the state turn to their local law enforcement to implement necessary legal protections from violence, sexual assault and stalking. Law enforcement plays an extremely important role in enforcing the laws that you—Maine legislators—all work so hard to consider, develop, and send on for implementation. These laws include (but are not limited to) those that direct law enforcement to: assist in reporting, investigating or prosecuting a stalker; seek a Protection From Abuse Order; and, assist in retrieving items from a violent home. This reliance on local law enforcement agencies is indispensable to promote a safe environment for Maine women.

This is one reason why the Maine Women's Lobby has such grave concerns about this bill. When a woman is asking for police help with a dangerous situation, she should not then become the target of suspicion. Whether or not worry about potential immigration proceedings is warranted, it is not just or fair to add the stress of this fear to a woman's burden as she seeks safety for herself and/or her family.

Further, it is important to note several key points: Federal law does not require local law enforcement to engage in federal immigration enforcement. Local law enforcement officers are not trained as immigration agents and cannot be expected to interpret very complicated immigration laws. And, local

295 Water Street, Suite 10, Augusta, ME 04330 • 207.622.0851

[wparrish@mainewomen.org](mailto:wparrish@mainewomen.org)

[www.mainewomen.org](http://www.mainewomen.org)



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governments should not be forced to choose between their budgets and the constitutional rights of their residents.

We—all citizens of Maine in communities statewide and especially women—are safer when there is trust between communities and law enforcement. This bill undermines that trust by making immigrant communities—and the women of them—fear the police and keep or put themselves in situations of more and continued danger.

We urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 1449 for the good and safety of Maine's women. Thank you for your time.