



SCHOLARS
STRATEGY NETWORK

Maine LD 2106: An Act to Prohibit the Disclosure of Nonpublic Records without Proper Judicial Review

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Dear Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of LD 2106.

I am a member of the **Maine chapter** of the Scholars Strategy Network and am a professor of cultural anthropology at the University of Maine at Farmington. I offer this testimony based on my own professional experience and community engagement and do not speak on behalf of UMF or the UMaine System.

I have taught at the University of Maine Farmington since 2011. Being a professor, advisor and mentor to New Mainers has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. I have had numerous students who were born in or have family from Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, Mexico, and other countries. Many of them spent their formative years in refugee camps and have served as cultural brokers between their parents and the myriad institutions they have learned to navigate in the U.S. Every one of them has demonstrated a level of dedication, grit, and passion for education that enhances the entire learning experience for every student in the classroom. My New Mainer students have graduated to then serve on the Maine legislation, become directors for nonprofit organizations, attend graduate and law school, and other paths ultimately becoming trusted leaders in their communities.

Currently many of my students, those who are from away or not, are afraid. They are scared to leave campus and in some instances to even attend class. Students have expressed apprehension about participating in protests or vigils, even though they badly want to, out of fear of facing violence and even lethal backlash. This does not feel like the United States of America, this feels much like Latin America where I have spent over 20 years conducting fieldwork.

My research centers on development, gender, war and reconciliation and I am seeing the long used playbook of Peruvian and other Latin American authoritarian regimes used here in our own communities. While we were once the envy of those from Peru and other countries I visit frequently, we are now often pitied as they know all too well the path upon which we are heading.

I also work as a country condition expert for asylum cases from the country of Peru. In this capacity I have become intimately familiar with the trauma and danger families experience causing them to seek asylum in our country. I have gained insight into the ways in which our immigration system is deeply flawed, often leaving families in limbo for years at a time.

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<https://scholars.org>

I truly believe that we need to find better ways to offer asylum for those seeking refuge and we need smart immigration reform. But sending out undertrained armed masked thugs to terrorize our communities is not the answer. Failing to acknowledge gross abuse of military tactics to those exercising free speech is not the answer. Whisking away individuals with active asylum cases, citizens and those with no criminal record is not the answer. And perpetuating lies to the general public is disgraceful.

While we need federal action, we can and must act at the state level. I urge you to support LD2106 to protect the constitutional rights and privacy of Maine citizens to seek education, healthcare, and information without fear. We must show that we are better than those opting to terrorize Mainers for their own political gain and personal retribution. We protect one another.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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