

Testimony in support of HB0047: Public Institutions of Higher Education – Contracts – Prohibition

Dear Representatives of the Maryland General Assembly,

I, Amy Rivera, strongly urge representatives in the Maryland General Assembly to vote YES on HB0047, to ensure that public institutions of higher education cannot enter into or renew contracts with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Before I speak on this bill specifically, I want to make something clear. ICE is an institution that has a reputation for terrorizing communities and ignoring directives (such as sanctuary policies), making them an untrustworthy organization to work with. ICE has facilitated the “misplacement” of thousands of migrant children, kept immigrants in inhumane detention camps, forced hysterectomies upon detainees, and have multiple cases of alleged sexual assault against them, amongst other atrocities. The abuse is undeniable and well recorded. That said, what place could an organization like this have at a public institution such as my university? Simply put, they shouldn't.

I remember the day I was told that my university had a contract with ICE. I was a freshman new to the school. My first reaction was one of fear and suspicion. I remember being very concerned not only about my own well-being but for my fellow students as well, especially those who are undocumented. I remember feeling betrayed that my school, a public institution that I pay to attend, could rationalize working with such an abhorrent organization while also preaching about diversity and inclusion. Every time I have raised my concerns, I have been completely shut down by administrators. I have been accused of not knowing what I am talking about, being disrespectful, and starting “unnecessary drama”. Although these comments are disheartening, I assure you that I am very much aware and informed about the purposes of these types of contracts. I know that they are allegedly meant to be strictly academic, and not from the enforcement side of ICE, how much each side benefits monetarily, and the outcomes of these programs that are created. That does not change the fact that having contracts with an organization as violent and unpredictable as ICE is still morally wrong considering what we know what ICE has done and the various abuses they are capable of committing. Universities cannot claim to care about the health, safety, and well-being of

students while supporting an organization that actively works against undocumented students and their families.

I have the privilege of being a citizen, but I have undocumented classmates that have disclosed to me their fear of just being on campus. Although it is “assured” by administration that ICE officers would never step foot on campus, can we honestly say that ICE would adhere to those promises? There have been countless instances in which ICE officials have picked up undocumented immigrants from churches, hospitals, and other areas where community members should be able to feel safe and live their lives without trepidation and intimidation. Although institutions may contend that these contracts benefit students, are programs (that can be replaced by various alternatives) for a select few students really worth the peace of mind, safety, and wellbeing of countless others who live with the fear of having their lives upended by ICE? I do not think so. These contracts may be made by another branch of ICE, but they all connect to the same tree rooted in the unjust oppression of people who just want to live their lives. If the MD government truly wants to have the trust of undocumented MD residents and all of us who support them, this bill must be passed.