



March 27, 2025

House Bill 1222
Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 1222 – Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act). This Bill would prohibit local jurisdictions from entering into agreements that authorize the state, local government, or any of their agents, officers, or employees to enforce civil immigration law.

When I took office, Anne Arundel County was one of three Maryland counties that participated in the program authorized under Section 287(g) of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, commonly known as 287g. Under 287g, county detention staff working under the supervision of an ICE program manager screened prisoners for immigration status during intake at the Jennifer Road Detention Center, after individuals were already in custody for committing a crime. While the information about each foreign-born detainee was entered into the ICE database, not a single individual was actually turned over to ICE custody until the crime for which they were arrested was adjudicated, whether that crime was violent or minor. In other words, those criminals served their time in jail, regardless of the 287g program. Without the 287g program, ICE still would have detained these same individuals, because they knew someone was in custody within an hour of arrest through information sharing with the Department of Homeland Security.

I made the decision to terminate our County's 287g agreement based on feedback from our public safety professionals and community members. Anne Arundel County and Maryland have been shaken by the gruesome murders of young Latino residents by members of MS-13, which extorts payments from immigrants who fear the prospect of being deported. Our police department understands that the only way to put MS-13 out of business locally is to protect and win the trust of the people MS-13 preys upon. Many of these people fled El Salvador and other Central American countries seeking asylum from the gang violence that has terrorized their communities. Most are here working in local businesses, paying taxes, and hoping that the great American political pendulum swings back to the place where immigrants were given a path to citizenship, as they were during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. These people fear ICE, and while our police were not deputized to act as agents of ICE, the community was well aware that our detention staff played that role. Therefore, members of our immigrant communities often made a decision to avoid interacting with the police, for fear that family and friends would be vulnerable to ICE deportation. That was an obstacle to our police department's efforts to protect these communities and all residents from MS-13 and other threats to their safety.

Ending 287g in Anne Arundel County aligned us with the vast majority of counties across the state and country. It did not increase crime as the program's advocates claimed it

would, nor it did hinder the legal enforcement activities ICE undertakes. What it did do was separate criminal law enforcement and immigration enforcement, a longstanding principle espoused by politicians across the political spectrum. Anne Arundel County, as do most counties, continues to cooperate with ICE through a federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS) program known as Secure Communities.

Given our own experience with 287g in Anne Arundel County, I do not believe it to be a program that is effective, nor a responsible use of local resources. In our own case, it actually proved to be a hindrance to protecting our residents and an impediment to enforcing criminal laws. For all of these reasons, I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 1222.



Steuart Pittman
County Executive