
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT OF HB 1222

Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)

Judiciary Committee

02/27/2025

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports HB 1222 - with amendments - which will prohibit the State and its local apparatus from entering into federal immigration enforcement agreements except under special circumstances, such as the conviction of certain crimes of violence. The bill will help shore up public safety and trust, prevent racial profiling, and preserve State and local resources.

HB 1222 will ensure that local law enforcement focuses on serious crimes instead of tearing families apart. 287(g) agreements divert local police's attention away from their primary duty of public safety to immigration enforcement. Deputized local agents are trained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to enforce immigration law against people who have not committed any criminal offense at all.¹ This abuse of power erodes the relationship and trust between local law enforcement and the communities they are supposed to protect. Fear of family separation and unlawful detainment consequently keeps members of immigrant communities from engaging with public services. When immigrant communities feel safe to report serious crimes, cooperate with police, and access public services, our communities are safer and everyone benefits.

The Values Act will work as a guardrail against discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or perceived immigration status. Frederick County has demonstrated the clear danger that 287(g) agreements represent to the State's immigrant communities. These agreements are voluntary partnerships between state and local agents with the federal government, and can stoke existing racial animus in localities where agents pay out of pocket to serve as ICE deputies. Data from the effects of 287(g) implementation in Frederick County through the sheriff's office has shown a higher number of arrests of Hispanics than would have happened without the expanded powers granted to its agents.² More than 80 percent of the county's 287(g) arrests were for low-level offenses and 60 percent were for traffic offenses.³ HB 1222 is an important step toward a refusal of racialized myths of criminality and the expansion of protections for the State's hard-working immigrant communities.

287(g) agreements are established at a cost to the State and local governments. When

¹ Coon, Michael. (2018, August 8). Local Immigration Enforcement and Arrests of the Hispanic Population. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*. Vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 645–666. <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241700500305>.

² Coon, Michael. (2018, August 8). Local Immigration Enforcement and Arrests of the Hispanic Population. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*. Vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 645–666. <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241700500305>.

³ ACLU of Maryland. (2018, April 7). *End the Federal 287(G) Program in Maryland*. Retrieved from www.aclu-md.org/en/campaigns/end-federal-287g-program-maryland.

local law enforcement cooperates with federal immigration authorities, individuals suspected of immigration violations, often arrested for non-violent offenses, may be held for extended periods while awaiting transfer to ICE custody. Additionally, personnel costs including salaries, benefits, and overtime as well as administrative supplies draw on state and local government resources.⁴ At a time when our state is cutting valuable public services to address a three billion dollar deficit, we cannot afford to take on the fiscal burden of these federal duties at the expense of Marylanders. House Bill 1222 would help prevent these unnecessary expenses by limiting such detentions, and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are used effectively and with thoughtful discretion.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report with amendments on HB 1222. We support a clean bill that removes the amendments added to the bill in the Judiciary Committee that require notification and transfer to ICE. The sole purpose of this legislation is to end 287(g) agreements in Maryland, not to create or mandate new forms of collaboration with ICE. Local jurisdictions already have the discretion to engage with ICE if they choose; ending 287(g) agreements does not limit that existing authority. We strongly support a clean bill that aligns with the original intentions of the legislation - to simply terminate 287(g) agreements in Maryland. This is what will bring Maryland closer to our values.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

⁴American Immigration Council. (2025, January). *The 287(g) Program: An Overview*. Retrieved from https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/the_287g_program_an_overview_2025_0.pdf