

HB1222_crossover
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03/27/2025
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TESTIMONY ON HB#1222 - POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support with some amendments of HB1222, Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)

A core Jewish value for me is the commandment to care for the stranger which is mentioned more times than *any* other commandment in the Torah — more even than the command to love God (*v'ahavta*). According to the Talmud, Rabbi Eliezer the Great noted that "the Torah warns 36 times, and some say 46 times, not to oppress the stranger" (Babylonian Talmud, *Bava M'tzia* 59b). The decree is articulated in a number of ways: "You shall not wrong nor oppress the stranger, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:20). "The strangers who reside with you shall be to you as your citizens... for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:34).¹

For over a decade, federal policy limited Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activities. But, as of January 20, 2025, the revocation of these immigrant protections has left immigrant communities vulnerable to enforcement actions in ways that threaten their safety where they should feel safe. Frederick County is facing an increased level of fear in our immigrant community due to the presence of the 287(g) program proudly promoted by our sheriff. That same sheriff and his department have been sued and lost multiple cases for their overzealous policing of our county's immigrant population.

This revised Federal policy shift has already created an environment of fear and uncertainty, discouraging individuals from seeking medical care, pursuing education, accessing legal resources, or engaging with law enforcement. As a result, our communities, public health, and overall safety are at risk.

As a member of multiple organizations supporting our immigrant communities regardless of their documentation status, this is an issue of concern to me and those organizations. Among the organizations I work with are Jews United for Justice (JUFJ), the ACLU, SURJ Baltimore, and the RISE Coalition of Western Maryland.

¹ [https://reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study/torah-commentary/commandment-love-and-help-stranger#:~:text=The%20decree%20is%20articulated%20in,%22%20\(Leviticus19%3A34\).](https://reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study/torah-commentary/commandment-love-and-help-stranger#:~:text=The%20decree%20is%20articulated%20in,%22%20(Leviticus19%3A34).)

These violations of the dignity and humanity of our immigrants goes against my faith and my personal commitment to those values.

I stand with immigrant communities and support this vitally needed bill, the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act, because it will:

1. **Protect Access to Essential Services:** No one should have to choose between life-saving medical care and the risk of family separation. Children deserve to attend school without fear, and individuals must be able to seek justice in our courts without the threat of detention.
2. **Enhance Public Safety:** When immigrants feel safe accessing services and reporting crimes, our entire community benefits. Fear of enforcement discourages individuals from cooperating with law enforcement, which in turn hampers public safety efforts.
3. **Strengthen Community Trust:** By establishing clear boundaries for immigration enforcement, we foster trust between immigrant communities and the institutions meant to serve them. This trust is essential for maintaining a healthy, vibrant, and cohesive society.
4. **[Relieve some fears of] DACA recipients [who] are increasingly feeling more uncertainty** as the fate of the immigration program protecting them from deportation continues to be [challenged in court](#) — at a time when President Donald Trump is pushing his administration to carry out “[the largest deportation program in American history](#).”² The government might pursue the deportation of DACA recipients through misuse of the database containing their information and attempt to take them into custody in locations formerly off limits to that ICE intervention.

This bill passed the House with amendments, including one that must be removed before your committee and the Senate passes it. The vote for passage was 98-38 on 03/17/25.

I 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. **I 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.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB1222.

² <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/daca-recipients-trump-deportation-crackdown-dreamers-immigration-rcna191667>