

Testimony on HB 1222 - Favorable with Amendments
HB 1222- Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 27, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Louise Weissman. I'm a resident of Greenbelt, District 22 and I am writing in support of **HB 1222- Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)**. I ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee vote for the bill **favorably with amendment** to the current version of the bill before you today.

I was born and raised in Boston, MA. I am the daughter and granddaughter of Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants who came to the United States from Eastern Europe in the first part of the 20th century. My family members left Poland and Russia as persecution against Jews was rampant and as extended family members already in the U.S. were watching attempts to pass exclusion acts in the United States that would put limit on Jewish migration..

I am not attempting to compare my family's story and experience to those of our current immigrant neighbors. But there is a striking similarity that past and current immigrants have. They share two similar aspirations: a desire to improve the quality of their lives and to ensure a better future for their children.

The Maryland Values Act upholds our nation and our state's values: fairness, dignity, and justice for all. It reinforces a commitment that our state is not in the business of family separation. Maryland must say NO to using its local and state resources to collaborate with ICE to support an agenda of mass deportation. We should stand firm in its commitment to community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law by ending 287(g) in Maryland.

The 287(g) program has a well-documented history of racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detentions. It diverts local law enforcement from their primary duty, and forces officers to act as immigration agents rather than agents committed to ensuring public safety. The 287g initiative erodes trust, particularly among immigrant communities. It makes people less likely to report crimes or seek help when needed.

Immigrant safety and protection and measures to create a pathway to citizenship have always been important to me. Before I retired, I worked in organizations led and/or with large immigrant memberships that advance justice for all: SEIU and United We Dream, the nation's largest Dreamers organization. Currently, I live in Greenbelt with an estimated population of 4,000 immigrants. But of equal importance, my involvement in immigrant justice is a reflection of my family's own immigration story. I am the daughter and granddaughter of Eastern European Jews who came to the United States in the early parts of the 20th century. While I do not want to send a message that I am comparing my family's story and experience with those of immigrants today, there are striking aspirations that they share: a desire to improve the quality of their lives and to ensure a better future for their children.

As a member of Jews United for Justice and CASA Ally Network, 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 the Maryland Values Act must be 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. This is what will bring Maryland closer to our values. Therefore, I urge the committee to provide a favorable report with amendments to **HB 1222**