



March 25, 2025

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Annapolis, MD

Subject: Testimony on HB 1222- Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act) - Favorable with Amendments

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Taj Smith. I am the President of the Washington County NAACP. I am writing to provide testimony supporting HB 1222, the Maryland Values Act, with amendments. This act embodies the principles of fairness, dignity, and justice for all individuals, regardless of their immigration status.

The Maryland Values Act affirms that our state should not be involved in tearing families apart, undermining public trust, or diverting state and local resources towards a federal deportation agenda. Instead, Maryland must reaffirm its commitment to community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law by ending the 287(g) agreements.

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 of protecting public safety by forcing them into the role of immigration agents. This shift in focus not only erodes trust within our communities, particularly among immigrant populations, but also makes individuals less likely to report crimes or seek assistance when they need it most. Ending 287(g) would ensure that Maryland's resources are utilized to foster public safety rather than support federal deportation efforts.

The NAACP's stance on immigration reform is rooted in humanitarian values and the imperative to treat all individuals with respect and dignity. We believe that immigration policies should not solely focus on enforcement but must consider our nation's and its people's needs. We oppose local, state, and federal laws that exploit citizens' fears and xenophobia, leading to racial profiling or the denial of basic rights. We are strongly against laws that empower local law enforcement to conduct federal immigration enforcement and arrest individuals solely based on their suspected immigration status.

ICE actions in our communities compromise safety and instill fear among residents. The interference of ICE in Washington County undermines the mission of the NAACP, as it creates an environment where individuals feel unsafe and are less likely to access essential resources and support services. Our county's recent initiation of a 287(g) agreement is particularly concerning, given the diversity of our immigrant populations, who significantly contribute to the fabric of our rural county. Our local police systems are already overburdened, and a focus on immigration enforcement detracts from community policing efforts.

The Washington County NAACP urges the committee to recognize that maintaining the 287(g) agreements will do more harm than good, particularly in a community that already harbors distrust toward law enforcement. As part of the Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, alongside CASA, we support a clean bill that eliminates the amendments added in the judiciary committee that mandate notification and transfer to ICE. The sole purpose of HB 1222 is to end 287(g) agreements in Maryland, not to create or mandate new forms of collaboration with ICE. Local jurisdictions retain discretion to engage with ICE if they choose; ending 287(g) agreements does not limit that existing authority.

In conclusion, the Washington County NAACP respectfully urges the committee to provide a favorable report with amendments on HB 1222.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Taj Smith", written over a horizontal line.

Taj Smith, President
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