



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,

UNITE HERE Local 7 offers a **favorable with amendment** testimony in support of **HB 1222- Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)**

UNITE HERE Local 7 is a labor union that represents thousands of hotel, gaming, and food service workers throughout Maryland. Our union advocates for good, family-sustaining jobs for hospitality workers.

At its core, this bill is about upholding Maryland's values—fairness, dignity, and justice for all. The Maryland Values Act affirms that our state should not be in the business of tearing families apart, undermining public trust, or funneling state and local resources into a federal deportation agenda. Instead, Maryland should stand firm in its commitment to community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law - by ending 287(g).

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, forcing them to act as immigration agents rather than community protectors. This erodes trust, particularly among immigrant communities, making people less likely to report crimes or seek help when needed. Ending 287(g) ensures Maryland's resources are used to foster public safety—not help the federal deportation agenda.

Our members are very concerned about their communities, neighbors, and their safety. Yet ICE actions compromise community safety and create fear. Our Union's mission is to help working people – regardless of their immigration status – to find their courage and advocate for better working conditions. The presence of ICE in our communities undermines that mission and creates a chilling effect for our organizing efforts.

Many of our African American members' families migrated from the South to the North of this country – at times in violation of the law –to seek a place to raise their families free from physical assault and forced labor. Our migrant neighbors so too are seeking a safe future for their families. Collaborating with ICE is standing on the wrong side of history.

Further, our members' children attend diverse schools across the state. Many of our members have lived in this country for generations, but their children have friends who have not. Our members do not want to see their children's friends suddenly deported, or avoiding attending school out of fear.

As part of the Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, along with CASA, **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.

UNITE HERE Local 7 urges the committee to provide a favorable report with amendments on HB 1222.