

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

Hearing date: March 27, 2025

From: Laura Atwood, Silver Spring, MD

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing a **favorable with amendment** testimony in support of **HB 1222 - Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)**.

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).

I'm a physical therapist and a longtime Maryland resident. I've spent enough time living and observing to appreciate that every person has a deep humanity that we must recognize—and I have also seen consequences of childhood trauma play out for decades and even generations. I am deeply concerned about the family separation and childhood trauma that accompanies so many detentions and deportations.

For too many people, deportation is a death sentence; detention here and/or in the deportation country represents loss of liberty; and anyone deported loses the freedom to spend time with their loved ones in the community that's been their home. There are new revelations of horrific conditions in El Salvador prisons that ICE is deporting people straight to (with no due process); and studies have followed cases of people murdered immediately upon return to the country they had fled.

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.

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

I urge the committee to provide a favorable report with amendments on HB 1222.