

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,

Rev. Charlene Belsom Zellmer, Interfaith Minister, offers a favorable with amendment testimony in support of HB 1222- Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act).

In my long established ministry for immigrant justice, it has become clear to me the threat level that 287g imposes on our entire community: children afraid to go to school for fear their parent will have been profiled and picked up by ICE, parents afraid to go to work because of the local law enforcement posing as federal agents, extraordinary skepticism that has developed as a consequence of distrust in local law enforcement.

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.

In my real time work in ministry, I uphold the values of dignity, respect, and love for all. 287g undermines those value and create a morally corrupt civil society. I accompanied a woman from Frederick County who was detained by local police detailed as ICE as she ate her lunch. Her and her family's trauma should not should for any of our Maryland families. And there are, sadly, many stories like hers

.

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.

I, Rev. Charlene Belsom Zellmer, MDiv, urge the committee to provide a favorable report with amendments on HB 1222.