



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 26th, 2025

SB828

Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

Judiciary Committee

Position: Favorable with Amendment

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support with amendment of **Senate Bill 828**. The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

The Protecting Sensitive Locations Act (SB 828) seeks to establish clear guidelines and policies regarding immigration enforcement at designated sensitive locations to protect vulnerable individuals and uphold community trust. Under this legislation, the Attorney General is required to develop guidelines that ensure sensitive locations— certain schools, libraries, and units of State government—remain safe spaces free from the fear of immigration enforcement actions. Additionally, state agencies operating within these locations must adopt policies aligned with these guidelines or provide written notice explaining the decision not to implement such policies. This ensures transparency, accountability, and consistency in the protection of immigrant communities.

This legislation aligns with the principles of human dignity, solidarity, and the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. Immigrants, especially undocumented individuals, often face significant fear and uncertainty, which can deter them from accessing essential services such as healthcare, education, and legal assistance. By ensuring that sensitive locations remain accessible and protected from immigration enforcement actions, this bill upholds the dignity of individuals and fosters a society that prioritizes care over exclusion. Solidarity calls on us to stand with immigrants as brothers and sisters, ensuring they are treated with compassion and fairness rather than fear and marginalization. The Catholic commitment to the common good further reinforces the need for policies that build trust between immigrant communities and local institutions, rather than policies that drive individuals into hiding due to fear of deportation.

Senate Bill 828 benefits individuals, communities, and society by reinforcing trust in public institutions, allowing immigrants to access critical services without fear, and ensuring

that enforcement actions do not disrupt essential community functions. It promotes public health and safety, as immigrants will feel safe seeking medical care and reporting crimes without fear of immigration consequences. Schools will remain places for learning rather than sites of potential trauma for children worried about family separation. Additionally, the bill strengthens social cohesion by ensuring that all Marylanders—regardless of immigration status—can participate fully in their communities without the threat of unjust enforcement.

In upholding justice and human dignity, this legislation reflects our collective moral obligation to protect the most vulnerable and foster a society built on compassion, trust, and fairness. As a State we should recognize humanity in every individual and acknowledge that living in fear is something no individual or family should face.

Proposed amendment to strengthen Senate SB828

An essential amendment to the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act must include places of worship as designated sensitive locations to ensure that all individuals can freely practice their religion without fear of immigration enforcement actions. The right to religious freedom is a fundamental human right, deeply rooted in both Catholic Social Teaching and the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Places of worship serve as sanctuaries of spiritual refuge, providing essential support, including shelter, counseling, and community assistance, particularly for vulnerable immigrant populations. Allowing enforcement actions within these sacred spaces would create a chilling effect, discouraging individuals from seeking faith-based support and violating the moral imperative to uphold human dignity. By explicitly adding places of worship to the list of protected sensitive locations, this legislation would align with the principles of religious freedom, the common good, and the protection of the marginalized, ensuring that faith communities remain places of hope, solidarity, and sanctuary for all.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable with amendment report on **Senate Bill 828**.