

Executive Director
Jessica A. Quincosa, Esq.

Deputy Director
Kayla Williams-Campbell, Esq.

Director of Litigation & Advocacy
Lisa Sarro, Esq.

Director of Operations
Claudia V. Aguirre

Interim Development Director
Jordan Colquitt

Managing Attorney
Ivy Finkenshtadt, Esq.

Supervising Attorneys
Warren Buff, Esq.
Kathleen Hughes, Esq.
Amy B. Siegel, Esq.

Attorneys
Adebola Adedoyin, Esq.
Vanessa Agbar, Esq.
Golnaz Alemousavi, Esq.
Jennifer Clark, Esq.
Katherine Cooke-Caraway, Esq.
Sheree Hughes, Esq.
Lekwon Imoke, Esq.
Deborah Kadiri, Esq.
John Kowalko, Esq.
Eric Orr, Esq.
Hina Rodriguez, Esq.
Peter Spann, Esq.
Jawaid Stationwala, Esq.
Tangi Turner, Esq.
Riana Yaman, Esq.

Equal Justice Works Fellows
Ashley Blankenship, Esq.
Emory Cole II, Esq.
Kency Nittler, Esq.

Staff
Jonathan Asprilla
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Samir Vasquez Romero
Karen Zayas



SB0828
Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

Judiciary Committee Hearing
March 26, 2025

Position: Favorable

To the Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Community Legal Services (CLS) is a nonprofit legal services provider dedicated to ensuring equitable access to justice and due process of law for Maryland's most under-represented populations. We write in support of all parts of this bill, and in particular with respect to its impact on access to Maryland courts for people who urgently need the court's protection but fear seeking out that protection as a result of the potential for immigration enforcement efforts within and near courthouses.

The Need for SB0828

Senate Bill 0828 is a crucial measure to ensure that all Maryland residents, regardless of their immigration status, can safely access the courts. Many of our clients are survivors of domestic violence and individuals threatened with eviction. For these individuals, **the courthouse is not just a place of legal recourse—it is often their last hope for safety, justice, and protection.** However, when courthouses become sites of immigration enforcement, many individuals, particularly undocumented immigrants and mixed-status families, avoid seeking the legal remedies to which they are entitled due to fear of arrest, detention, or deportation.

This fear is especially acute for survivors of domestic violence. Many survivors need court orders to protect themselves and their children from abusive partners. If they fear that seeking such protection could expose them to immigration enforcement, they may remain trapped in dangerous and violent situations. No person should have to choose between personal safety and the risk of deportation.

Additionally, individuals facing civil lawsuits, including debt collection actions or landlord-tenant disputes, must feel secure in appearing in court. **When people avoid the legal system due to fear of immigration enforcement, it results in default judgments, loss of housing, and further financial instability,** deepening systemic inequalities that disproportionately harm vulnerable populations.

Ensuring that courts are safe spaces where individuals can seek justice without fear is fundamental to the principles of fairness and due process. House Bill 1006 aligns with Maryland's commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of all its residents, regardless of immigration status. **We therefore urge the committee to pass Senate Bill 0828 to reaffirm Maryland's dedication to justice for all.**

Please feel free to reach out to Jessica Quincosa, Executive Director, and Lisa Sarro, Director of Litigation & Advocacy, with any questions at quincosa@clspgc.org, and sarro@clspgc.org, respectively.