



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony
SB828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)
March 26, 2025
SUPPORT

TO: The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair; The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett, Vice Chair; and Members of the Judiciary Committee
FROM: Dr. Jeffery Johnson, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County's local, state, and federally designated anti-poverty group, strongly supports SB828, which would require the Attorney General to develop guidance regarding immigration enforcement at sensitive locations, such as public schools, public libraries, and other agencies that receive state funding. This bill would also require the Attorney General to develop guidance regarding the rights and responsibilities of individuals who interact with federal law enforcement personnel enforcing federal immigration law. Finally, sensitive locations would be required to implement policies consistent with the Attorney General's guidance.

As the governing body for the Montgomery County Community Action Agency, we have heard about the chilling effect of recent immigration policies for those seeking services. Our agency's Takoma-East Silver Spring (TESS) Community Action Center, Navigation Team, and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) link residents to critical services and provide direct services to residents every day, regardless of their immigration status. Similarly, as our board is the governing body for Head Start in the County and the agency is the grantee, we are receiving reports that the current immigration policy is instilling fear in families and negatively impacting attendance at school. Anxious parents who are concerned for their own safety and the safety of their children have reached out asking for help to walk their children home from school. Parents are afraid to leave their homes and are afraid to linger at bus stops. Families fear being separated and are NOT sending their children to school consistently out of fear. The children, many of whom are citizens, are missing out on instruction, being exposed to toxic levels of anxiety, and are being kept from their daily routines and friends and teachers who care about them.

At this critical time, we must do everything in our power to make sure all residents feel safe in their schools, social services offices, doctors' offices, religious spaces, and other places where residents seek education, supports, and emergency assistance. Being in a perpetual state of fear can cause irreparable damage to a person's wellbeing, and to a community--our Montgomery County community. The emotional health of a person affects all aspects of their life, including

their physical health, and their ability to function in society, make a living, go to school, care for children, etc.

Undocumented individuals face many barriers when seeking gainful employment. Losing safe spaces compounds the needs of families as they are unable to find employment and are so overwhelmed by fear, they are unable to seek food and supports from community agencies. This is inhumane. SB828 can help to alleviate some of the fears many of our neighbors have and help to ensure that they continue to seek services.

Montgomery County is home to one of the most diverse populations in the country, where 20.9% of residents are Black, 16.1% of residents are Asian, 21.1% of residents are Hispanic or Latino, and 40.6% of residents are white/not Hispanic or Latino. Additionally, a third of the County's population was born outside of the United States.¹ Our board believes that the County's diversity is to be celebrated and supported. This means that we must take action to protect our neighbors, especially the most vulnerable.

The Montgomery County Community Action Board strongly supports SB828 and asks for the Committee's favorable report.

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/montgomerycountymaryland/PST045224>