

SB 828
Immigration Enforcement – Sensitive Locations – Access, Guidance, and Policies
(Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)
House Judiciary Committee
March 26, 2025

SUPPORT

SB 828 directs the Attorney General to develop and publish guidance regarding the rights and responsibilities of state agencies and individuals who interact with federal law enforcement enforcing federal immigration law, and requiring statutory “sensitive locations” and state agencies that operate them to implement policies consistent with this guidance.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders are at risk of food insecurity. A person who is food insecure does not have consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day, and this problem persists in every area of the state. There are also communities and populations who are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, including families with children, older adults, and communities of color. Immigrant families that are facing food insecurity are also burdened by unique challenges, such as the availability of foods that are culturally familiar. The causes of food insecurity are complex and often include factors such as financial hardship and low income.

SB 828, as amended, outlines some types of our direct partners and places in which we provide food assistance as “sensitive locations,” including public schools and educational institutions and shelters. The importance of these locations being considered “safe” for all persons – but for SB 828, families that consist of neighbors with varying levels of citizenship status – cannot be overstated. The physical, mental, and emotional safety of neighbors accessing food are additional layers that stress the importance of ensuring that our network of partners is dignified and open for all. The Maryland Food Bank believes that food is a basic human right, and access to food resources is absolutely necessary; fear cannot and should not be a barrier to that right.

The Maryland Food Bank has open lines of communication with our almost 800 partners all across the state to determine the impacts of assumed and planned increases to immigration enforcement throughout the communities we serve. We anticipate that our partners may see a *decrease* in food distribution due to deportation fears; of particular deeper issue is immigrant neighbors not accessing food in locations that are comfortable and familiar to them such as their local schools and community areas. Our additional concern is that we have partners that know of families who come regularly and may have suddenly stopped – yet their need for food assistance has not subsided. The state’s ability to provide tangible and implementable guidance to these partners can only benefit our joint efforts and shared goal of feeding Marylanders who are affected by hunger.

For these reasons, the Maryland Food Bank appreciates the Committee’s consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 828.