



Testimony in **SUPPORT** of Senate Bill 346

SB 346 – Civil Actions – Violation of Constitutional Rights (No Kings Act)

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

We Are Casa (formerly, “CASA”) is pleased to offer **favorable testimony in support of SB 346 - Civil Actions – Violation of Constitutional Rights (No Kings Act).**

We Are CASA is a national organization building power and improving the quality of life in working-class Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities.

With a membership of over 189,000 members, We Are CASA creates change with its power-building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. For nearly forty years, We Are CASA has employed grassroots community organizing to bring our communities closer together and fight for justice, while simultaneously providing vital services to communities across the state and beyond.

ICE is violently assaulting our communities here in Maryland. In Glen Burnie on Christmas Eve, ICE agents shot a man in his work van multiple times, including his chest and thigh, causing his lung to collapse and sending him to the emergency room.¹ In Baltimore, ICE is holding our loved ones in crowded and inhumane conditions, with minimal access to food, water, and medication – not to mention lawyers.² Through We Are CASA's hotline, on which community members can report ICE enforcement actions they have witnessed or experienced, we regularly hear stories of ICE's brutality: just last month, a U.S. citizen teen told us his father's story. In Salisbury, ICE tackled his dad when they arrested him, seriously injuring both of his dad's legs. In detention, he was not receiving medical care.

¹ See Karina Tsui, “Department of Homeland Security changes story of Maryland ICE shooting after local police release contradicting details,” CNN Jan. 13, 2026, <https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/13/us/ice-shooting-maryland-immigration-hnk>.

² See Dennis Valera, “ICE blames weather after viral video allegedly shows dozens packed inside Baltimore holding rooms,” CBS Baltimore Jan. 30, 2026, <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/ice-weather-video-holding-room-immigration/>.

The violence and disregard for the law that we are seeing at home in Maryland is part of a wave of violence across the nation. Gerald Lunas Campos died in ICE detention in Texas last month. A medical examiner ruled his death a homicide, describing the cause of his death as “asphyxia due to neck and torso compression.”³

Keith Porter, Silverio Villegas Gonzalez, Renee Good, and Alex Pretti are just a few more of the people who ICE has killed or seriously injured. There has been a rash of deaths in ICE custody: 2025 was ICE’s deadliest year.⁴

ICE must be held accountable to the community for its actions. SB 346 provides a crucial mechanism to do so. We Are CASA’s members demand ICE be held accountable for the deep harms that it is causing our communities. SB 346 is one powerful step toward that accountability.

The U.S. Constitution grants all of us who live here rights against the use of excessive force by law enforcement, cruel and unusual punishment by the government, lack of due process, and more. But right now, there is no law on the books giving Marylanders a way to enforce those rights when federal officers, like ICE, trample them.⁵ This means that when ICE brutally beats a community member or denies them life-saving medical treatment, there may be no way to hold them accountable in court.

Without any law allowing community members to take federal agents to court when they violate the U.S. Constitution, ICE continues to act with impunity and its violence will only escalate. SB 346 helps fix that. Maryland can begin to chip away at ICE’s reign of terror by joining the other states – including California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maine, and New Jersey – that have already enacted similar legislation to protect their citizens.

SB 346 could be made a stronger tool if it guaranteed reasonable attorneys’ fees for community members who win in court, by replacing the word “may” with the word “shall” on page 2, line 21.

Passing SB 346 will put a powerful tool in the community’s hands to combat ICE’s abuses. And while it is just one of the many steps necessary to protect our communities at this critical time, it is a crucial one. **For these reasons, We Are CASA strongly urges the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 346.**

³ Michael Biesecker, “Cuban immigrant in ICE custody died of homicide due to asphyxia, autopsy finds,” PBS Jan. 22, 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/cuban-immigrant-in-ice-custody-died-of-homicide-due-to-asphyxia-a-utopsy-finds>.

⁴ Maanvi Singh *et al.*, “2025 was ICE’s deadliest year in two decades. Here are the 32 people who died in custody,” THE GUARDIAN, Jan. 4, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2026/jan/04/ice-2025-deaths-timeline>.

⁵ Erwin Chemerinsky & Burt Neuborne, “Renee Good’s Family Should Be Able to Sue the Officer Who Killed Her,” NY TIMES Jan. 14, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/14/opinion/renee-good-civil-rights-constitution.html>.