

The Great City of Mount Rainier

Office of Councilmember Celina Benitez

February 26, 2020

Senator Will Smith, Chair  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401



**RE: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 903 “Sensitive Locations Bill SB 903”** – Requires the Attorney’s General to create guidance on ICE entry to public schools, hospitals, and courthouses

Dear Chairman and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Celina Benitez, Councilmember for the Great City of Mount Rainier. A city that is enriched by its cultural diversity and A Hub for the Arts. A city that is empowered by its diversity and Proud to make all of our residents feel welcome and part of our community.

I’m writing in support to of Sensitive Location Bill SB903 which requires the Attorney’s General to create guidance on ICE entry to public schools, hospitals, and courthouses. In all honesty, public schools, hospitals, and courthouses should be consider off limits since is targeting our residents in the most vulnerable locations. Immigration agents should not be allowed in these locations. How can we as a municipality or state encourage our residents to be active members of society when a simple dropping off of your child at school could mean the last time they see their family. If a person or their child is sick and need to go to a hospital they should be able to, the alternative is having people sick risking their life by avoiding medical care. When it comes to the courts they want to be responsible member of society they should be allowed.

The image of ripping apart a family would be embedded on all the residents. As a war survivor, myself who as a child lived in fear of not seeing my parents I would tell you the fear is real and I would never wish on someone else to experienced lease alone my own child. Our immigrant community has deals with similar experiences ripping families apart would open wounds of the past and still to the next generation that same fear. Intimidating and fear is not the atmosphere I want my state to be known for.

Lastly, the national discussion on immigration has real implications at the local level that only exacerbates existing local challenges that will affect us even our ability to have an accurate count in the 2020 Census. As part of the census subcommittee we are knocking on doors and visiting schools to make sure every Marylander is counted. No matter where they were born they have chosen Maryland to raise their family, buy their home, open a business and hire others and volunteer in our community. Targeting our community at vulnerable places goes in direct contradiction to the atmosphere of inclusion we are building. In the last two census millions of dollars where not allocated to Maryland and we cannot afford to once again be denied our fair share of our funds to build programs in the short and long term. To build trust with our communities start here and has to start now.

I respectfully urge support for the **Sensitive Locations Bill SB 903**

Sincerely,

*Celina Benitez*

Celina Benitez, Councilmember City of Mount Rainier, Maryland

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