



Testimony in support of HB403 - 2020

Immigration Enforcement - Public Schools, Hospitals, and Courthouses – Policies

To: Hon. Luke Clippinger, Chair, and members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Jerry Kickenson and David Conrad, Congregation Action Network

Date: February 11, 2020

We are writing in **support of House Bill 403**, Immigration Enforcement - Public Schools, Hospitals, and Courthouses – Policies, on behalf of the Congregation Action Network. The Congregation Action Network is a network of faith communities in Washington, DC, and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs acting in solidarity to end detention, deportation, profiling, and criminalization of immigrants and demanding and upholding justice, dignity, safety, and family unity. With over 75 congregations and a thousand members throughout the capital area, including over 25 congregations and 300 members in Montgomery and Prince Georges counties, we live our faith in advocacy for our immigrant neighbors.

Our sacred texts and traditions teach us to welcome the stranger and love our neighbors as ourselves.

HB403 would direct the Maryland Attorney General to develop guidelines for use by public schools, hospitals and courthouses to establish policies restricting cooperation with federal immigration authorities consistent with law and permit these locations to implement such policies. Clear policies like these will increase trust in Maryland's immigrant community, leading to improved education of all children, including citizens, a healthier Maryland population and safe access to justice.

Due to fear of federal immigration authorities, residents in our communities have hesitated to allow their children to participate in school activities or even attend public school, avoid needed healthcare for themselves and their families, and avoided seeking justice for themselves or for others as witnesses to crimes. All Maryland residents, regardless of immigration status, should feel safe in school, when seeking medical care, and when participating in our justice system. It is immoral to force a woman to choose between going to court to obtain a restraining order or testify in a domestic violence case, or tolerate an abusive partner rather than risk arrest and deportation by accessing Maryland's justice system.

We strongly urge you to reach a favorable report for HB403. It will increase all Maryland residents' trust in official public spaces, making us all safer. It is the moral and right thing to do.

Respectfully yours,

Jerry Kickenson

Cluster Lead, Congregation Action Network (Montgomery County)

Martha Wells

Cluster Lead, Congregation Action Network (Prince Georges County)