



Resources for the Foreign Born

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FIRN Statement Regarding Maryland SB234/HB23- Maryland Driver Privacy Act

FIRN is a nonprofit organization located in Howard County, Maryland that empowers immigrants, refugees, asylees and other foreign-born individuals throughout Central Maryland by helping them access community resources and opportunities. FIRN opened its doors in October 1981 and serves immigrants from over 90 countries.

FIRN is very pleased to advocate for the approval and enactment of House Bill 23, otherwise known as the “Maryland Driver Privacy Act.” This legislation would ensure the private information of undocumented immigrants is protected against unwarranted investigations by Federal organizations, such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). It also bars law enforcement officials from abusing state and local databases, allowing them access only when the inquiring party can prove there is probable cause. By protecting those interested in obtaining a driver’s license, House Bill 23 directly aligns with our mission of empowering new Americans to help them achieve their goals and access community opportunities.

Since the passing of the Maryland Highway Safety Act in 2013, it is estimated that more than 275,000 undocumented immigrants have registered for a license with the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA). Also in that time, ICE has reportedly logged over 100 facial recognition sessions through the state driver’s database. Their access to this information has resulted in countless raids across the state, even targeting those with no criminal record, who have reportedly shared their personal information with no one other than the MVA. At FIRN, we have seen this breach of privacy deter our clients from applying for a driver’s license, which in turn limits their access to jobs, schools, doctor’s appointments, and more. This prohibits them not only from providing for themselves, but also from contributing to their community’s workforce and economy. As a result, we are ALL negatively impacted by these unapproved investigations.

We urge the House of Delegates to approve House Bill 23 and give all Maryland residents the confidence to apply for driver's licenses without fear of exposure or detainment. By requiring law enforcement officials to provide evidence and reasoning for access to state databases, you give these often vulnerable members of our society lawful protection so they can continue to support their families and contribute to our communities without fear.

Sources:

<https://www.aclu-md.org/en/press-releases/general-assembly-passes-bill-expand-drivers-license-access-immigrants>

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/bs-md-immigrant-licenses-20140920-story.html>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/02/26/ice-has-run-facial-recognition-searches-millions-maryland-drivers/>

Sincerely,



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