

January 25, 2021

Dear Senator Smith:

I am submitting my written testimony in favor of SB0088 “The Maryland Trust Act” to limit cooperation between MD law enforcement and ICE.

In Maryland, multiple counties have partnerships with U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement for the purported purpose of stopping immigration “crime”, but the truth is that the existence of ICE itself is the crime. Formed in the paranoid days after the 9-11 attack, when an enormous increase in government force and reach was seen as necessary, the agency has only become less accountable and more insidious in recent years. Its documented activities include warehousing people in deplorable conditions for long periods of time, denying detainees medical treatment, physical and sexual abuse, scores of deaths of people in their “care”, separating thousands of children from their parents, sterilizing dozens of people without their consent, making a mockery of the right to representation, and sending asylum-seekers back to situations where they face persecution and death for their beliefs or identities.

In contrast, what “crime” is it to seek a new life in a new country? So-called “illegal” immigrants have committed only paperwork violations necessitated by a byzantine and broken system; by simply coming here they have harmed no one at all. Immigration in fact has been shown time and again to make our communities stronger, more vibrant, and more prosperous. It is only xenophobia and the convenience of scapegoating the powerless that make us act as if the opposite were true. In Baltimore City, where population decline and the corresponding decline in tax revenue has made it difficult to keep the lights on, more immigration would be especially welcome!

By working with ICE to question, hold, and transfer Maryland residents into their custody, local law enforcement agencies lose even more of their thin credibility. Research has shown that in places that have laws like SB0088 in place, crime has gone down. This is the natural result of not forcing people into the shadows. It is past time that we ended this shameful and counter-productive collaboration.

I look forward to seeing support for this important legislation to protect and support immigrants, who are all an important part of our community.

Thank you,

Colline Emmanuelle
A Maryland resident & community member