

To: Senators Smith, Waldstreicher, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

I am a resident of District 23B and a long time Maryland resident. As a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County, a retired PGCPs elementary teacher, and as a Christian who is called to love the immigrant and refugee, I feel I must speak up in support of the Maryland Trust Act (SB0088/HB0304).

This bill will limit the state's cooperation and partnership with ICE and other federal agencies that enforce immigration laws. If passed, the Trust Act will make our communities safer by improving residents' relationships with law enforcement and other state entities. The Trust Act will convey compassion to all residents regardless of their status as immigrants.

Trust between communities and law enforcement is essential to public safety. Community members are more likely to engage with law enforcement when they do not fear harassment. And several studies show that jurisdictions with laws like the Trust Act have lower crime rates and stronger economies, and that such policies can actually encourage immigrants to report crimes.

Under the Trust Act, Maryland's criminal justice system will continue to operate normally. Those who commit crimes of violence will still be held accountable.

There is also nothing in the Trust Act that prevents the federal government from enforcing federal immigration law. It will simply halt the use of state resources and Maryland taxpayer dollars toward that end. As you know, the state is under no obligation to assist with federal responsibilities, and passing the Trust Act would be sending a clear message that Maryland will not contribute to attacking and targeting immigrants. Couldn't our state funds be better used elsewhere?

The Supreme Court and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals have both found that state and local law enforcement officers do not have the independent authority to arrest based solely on a civil immigration violation. Not only does it infringe on Fourth Amendment rights, but it is quite literally not in their job description. And doing so damages the relationship between communities and law enforcement.

This bill will also require the state Attorney General to create guidance on ICE enforcement on the premises of hospitals, courthouses, and schools. Can you imagine being separated, possibly forever, from your family while you are in the hospital recovering from surgery? Or being an abused woman, whose husband reports her as illegal to avoid the consequences of his behavior in a court of law? Or being a child afraid to go to school, because you worry your parent will be taken away when he or she comes to pick you up? It is imperative that all people feel safe using these community resources as they are essential to enjoying the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Passing the Trust Act will increase the safety of Marylanders by preventing law enforcement from inquiring about immigration status, detaining people on behalf of ICE, and notifying/transferring individuals to ICE custody.

It is for all these reasons that I urge you to vote in support of the Maryland Trust Act (SB0088/HB0304). Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Lori Kronser
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