



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Shared Voices for Liberal Religious Values in Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 234 (HB 23) - Personal Information - State and Local Agencies - Restrictions on Access

To: Senator Will Smith, Chair, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Steve Eckstrand, Member, Immigration Task Force, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Date: January 28, 2021

As a 40-year resident of Maryland, I am writing to urge the committee to support SB 234, which would deny access by federal agencies to any personal or photographic information held by state or local agencies for the purpose of immigration enforcement without a valid judicial warrant (which would provide some measure of monitoring and accountability).

Personal and photographic information is widely known to misidentify people --- particularly persons of color (including Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and others) --- and most facial recognition software used by police departments and federal agencies has been found by the National Institute of Standards and Technology to be inherently biased.

Despite the bias, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is being given access to, and is using, such facial recognition technology to sift through millions of state driver's license records for the purpose of identifying targets for immigration detention and deportation. This has a number of unfortunate results, including undermining efforts by states to promote law enforcement and safety. For example, beginning in 2013, the State of Maryland has been encouraging immigrants to obtain a driver's license as part of a program to ensure cooperation between the immigrant community and law enforcement and to ensure road safety. Such important efforts could be substantially impaired if ICE is continued to obtain Maryland's records without judicial warrants.

The use of such biased technology without judicial authorization is dangerous and violative of all Marylanders' right to privacy. Unless it is stopped, fear among our immigrant neighbors will continue to increase, and will lead to less cooperation between immigrant communities and law enforcement agents --- making all Maryland communities less safe. SB 234 would help to offset such abuses and consequences, and would help all of society.

Government practices such as ICE's obtaining and using state drivers' licenses without warrants are contrary to one of the core principles of my Unitarian Universalist faith --- the inherent worth and dignity of every person --- and unfairly infringe upon citizens' right to privacy. I urge the committee to vote in favor of SB 234.

Respectfully,

Stephen Eckstrand

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