

CHESAPEAKE PSR

PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

HB304 – State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement- SUPPORT

The Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR) is the state affiliate of the national Physicians for Social Responsibility, part of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985. CPSR is a statewide organization of over 700 e-activist physicians, health professions and other supporters which relies on sound, evidenced based public health policy principally regarding prevention of nuclear war and strategies to mitigate climate crisis all through the lens of racial equity and social justice exposed by the pandemic.

Local law enforcement employees should not be aiding Federal Immigration police in the Detention of immigrants for civil immigration violations without judicial warrants.

Recently an article in the Washington Post reported on studies that noted that where local police offices work with ICE aiding them in immigration enforcement, it reduced undocumented immigrants and their families' willingness to use health care and social safety net programs [like Medical Assistance and nutritional assistance](#) for women and children (SNAP and WIC). Another study found that policies that linked local police to ICE immigration [enforcement was associated with Hispanic women seeking prenatal care late and having inadequate overall care](#). People interviewed expressed fear of seeking services to which they were entitled likely a consequence of local participation in Federal immigration policy.

It is never good at any time to discourage participation in programs that improve the nutrition of children and that facilitate prenatal and childhood preventive and acute care. This is especially bad public health policy during a pandemic when the fear of one community to access treatment and prevention endangers the ability to control the pandemic for everyone. As healthcare providers, we know that law enforcement officers have a constant presence at hospitals and many clinics as well as vaccination sites. In addition, uniformed EMT workers are part of the emergency healthcare work force and can be mistaken for law enforcement officers. The detention of immigrants for civil immigration violations during a pandemic is especially unconscionable where being placed in congregate settings, often without proper PPE and distancing, puts them at especially high risk of contracting the SARS-2 coronavirus. A report from Physicians for Human Rights and Harvard Medical School, detailed evidence for cases [escalating more rapidly](#) inside detention centers compared with the US population. Another report detailed how deaths under ICE detention increased 7-fold between 2019 and 2020 and over half were from causes that were [preventable and related to being detained](#) (influenza, COVID-19, and suicide). With racial disparities documented so far in the Maryland roll-out of vaccines, there is no reason to believe that they those incarcerated would be protected by vaccination from COVID-19 any time soon.

Local police partnerships with ICE enforcement for civil immigration violations has a negative impact on education, a social determinant of health. ICE partnerships led to a substantial reduction in the enrollment of Hispanic students in public school in one state where it was studied, a [10% drop over time in localities where those partnerships existed](#). This is bad for diversity experience of all and raises concerns for the Hispanic students because multiple moves are associated with worse school performance and higher school drop-out rates.

What I have documented here is examples of Hispanic communities, [the largest demographic immigration group in Maryland](#), whose health, nutrition, and education have been negatively impacted where local officers participate in Federal immigration enforcement. This is not the kind of policy we want if we care about wellness of all of our communities.

Therefore, Chesapeake PSR supports HB 304 to end partnerships between local law enforcement officers and civil immigration violations without judicial warrants.

Gwen L. DuBois MD, MPH

President

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility (CPSR)

gdubois@jhsph.edu