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SB 088/HB 304 - SUPPORT
State and Local Government -
Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee/House Judiciary Committee
March 3, 2021

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

As an Interfaith Minister and over 50 year resident of the State of Maryland, I firmly support the passage of SB088/HB304, known as the TRUST ACT.

The Trust Act will end police partnership with ICE. The Trust Act will prevent ICE from entering sensitive locations like religious institutions, schools and hospitals, preserving the integrity and sanctity of those locations for all of us.

Mutual trust weaves the fabric of our communities. A sometimes hidden value, trust is unique in its unspoken power to knit our lives together. We must feel confident in the mutuality of our institutions, upon which we rely for support. We have a moral obligation to care for each other.

1. *We must be able to live safely.* If we are victims of a crime, we must have confidence that reporting that crime will not bring us into suspicion ourselves as perpetrators rather than victims. Our immigrant neighbors fear reporting crimes against them for fear of retaliation by police who might report them to ICE which would initiate their detention leading to deportation regardless of their status. Things like police traffic stops or holding people for minor offenses in local detention beyond their release date should not be a gateway to deportation, often to countries from which our immigrant neighbors have fled for their lives.
2. *We must be able to live in health.* If we need healthcare, we must have confidence that seeking it in our hour of need will not start a cascade of reporting leading to arrest, detention and deportation. This fear of seeking healthcare services at the time of need has led our immigrant neighbors to shorter lifespans, sicker existence, lost work, inability to care for their families. A healthy community is a vital community. We must care for each other to promote good health without fear of ICE intervention through police or hospital worker reporting. All of our residents in Maryland deserve good preventive healthcare including feeling confident that seeking vaccines during this pandemic for themselves and their families will not lead to their separation through detention and deportation.
3. *We must take care of each other.* The people I have served rely upon ministers to listen and act with compassion. Yet, in my experience, mine is just one profession among many upon which residents rely. Trust is built upon many acts of listening, kindness, and acceptance. All of our community helpers can participate in these acts, including those who preserve, protect and defend us. Our local helpers should never be obligated to report our neighbors to federal authorities. This kind of duplicity erodes public trust at all levels leading to fractured communities, pitting people against each other.

Passing the Trust Act will make our communities safer and healthier. Please lead with love in your decision making about our State.

I urge a favorable report on SB 088/HB 304.

With hope for peace and justice through love,

Rev. Charlene Belsom Zellmer, MDiv