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### **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB304**

#### **State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement**

My name is Helen Beneš Kaiser and I have resided in Maryland District 22 for the past two and a half years. I am writing you as a core leader of the Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, Prince George's County Minyan, and as a member of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ) and of Maryland Against ICE Detention (MDAID). **I strongly urge this committee to report favorably on HB304, the Trust Act.**

I write not only as a Jew who feels called by the Torah – which commands us to love and welcome the stranger (the refugee and immigrant) as our neighbor – but as a child of a political refugee from formerly Communist Czechoslovakia and as the daughter-in-law of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. My father, who had fled Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia in 1938, later sought asylum in the United States in 1948 after the Communist government took over in his country; he became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1957.

My parents-in-law fled Nazi Germany in 1938, sought asylum in the U.S. and became highly productive citizens of this country. Indeed, my husband's grandfather, who did not receive a visa in time to escape Nazi Germany, died in the Theresienstadt concentration camp. I have always been grateful for the asylum granted my father and my parents-in-law and as an adult have been committed to assuring that refugees and other immigrants fleeing persecution would find a safe haven in our country and especially in the state in which I live.

Unfortunately, ICE tactics mirror those of the totalitarian regimes that my parents-in-law and my father sought refuge from. When law enforcement of our progressive state of Maryland cooperates with ICE and allows ICE to enter public places, such as our schools, courthouses and hospitals, trust is broken between our immigrant community and the police. Public safety of all our citizens is then jeopardized. Immigrants are entitled to protection, not only as refugees from violence and injustice, but also because they already contribute so much to our economy and provide so many essential services across our state. The Trust Act, HB304, will make sure that immigrants living in Maryland feel as secure as all Maryland citizens.

I believe that nobody in our country, a country that welcomed my father and parents-in-law and provided them liberty from persecution, should live in the fear that drove my family to immigrate here. You have the power to provide security to the immigrants here in our state, and as your constituent, I urge you to do so. I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB304.

Sincerely,

Helen Beneš Kaiser