

William Garcia Trejo, Resident of Prince George's County

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB304

State and Local Government - Participation in Immigration Enforcement (Trust Act)

Judiciary Committee

March 3, 2021

To Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I left my home country of El Salvador to live in Maryland fleeing the violence there that I felt put my and my families life in danger. I've been living and working here for more than eight years now. Just a few months ago, I was stopped by the Howard County Police for holding my phone while driving - every immigrant's nightmare. The officer who stopped me, arrested me and took me to jail. He said that I had an arrest warrant for missing a previous court date, even though I have never missed a court date. I was able to prove to them that I attended my previous court date, and that I shouldn't be arrested for just using my phone on the road.

Nonetheless, the judge set me a bond for \$400. My mother pulled the money together on the same day so that I could get released - but after paying the money, they refused to release me. Next thing I know, an officer tells me that I have an arrest warrant from ICE and tells my mother that I'm going to be deported. This made no sense - as I have never had a deportation order.

The next day, ICE showed up, handcuffed my hands and feet, and took me to an ICE office in Baltimore. The ICE officer who spoke with me, also seemed to be confused as to why I was there considering I had no criminal background, gang involvement, etc. I was so scared. All I could do is tell the truth, that I have done everything right in the country including pay my taxes. The officer ultimately agreed that I shouldn't have been picked up for doing nothing. They released me with an ankle bracelet.

Those moments were the most terrifying moments of my life. The thought that flooded my mind then - and haunts me everyday - is the thought of being deported and separated from my heart, my three year old daughter, and leaving my family behind. I pray to God every day that I will not be separated from my family.

After having nothing on my record, I ultimately got picked up by ICE because the police continue to partner up with ICE to target people like me. Every day I, and so many others, live in fear. We won't ever be able to have trust in the police if they continue to do this. We can change this by passing the Trust Act in this legislative session. My life, and the lives of so many other immigrants in Maryland are depending on it. Please support HB304.