



The Maryland Chapter of Doctors for America submits this testimony in strong support of the passage of HB 304/SB 88 – ‘The Trust Act.’ We are part of Doctors for America, a national non-partisan nonprofit organization of over 21,000 physicians, medical students, trainees, advocates, and other health care professionals from all specialties committed to advocating for our patients. Those members, including the over 800 members in Maryland, support policies that protect all our patients regardless of citizenship status, allowing them to feel safe in accessing the health care that they need.

As physicians and medical students, we know how important it is for our patients to be able to access hospitals and other medical clinics when they need care, whether they are now sick or are looking to prevent themselves, a family member, or a future child from becoming sick through preventive and prenatal care. There are many barriers that our patients face in accessing the treatments, tests, and other health care services they need when they need them, including cost of care and lack of adequate insurance, transportation and geographical limitations, language barriers, and disjointed coordination of their medical needs. These barriers are often difficult for our patients to overcome regardless of whether or not they are a citizen.

However, for our patients who are migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers, the threat that Immigration agents might enter hospitals or medical clinics to seek them out for deportation or detention is enough to keep them from coming in. Whether they are worried about themselves or a family member, whether they are undocumented, in asylum limbo, or simply part of a community that has been wrongly profiled, our patients see the threat of ICE agents coming into health care institutions as an existential threat to their health, safety, and well-being over and above any health concern that might cause them to reconsider coming into the hospital. It is not just the presence of these agents that poses a threat to them; it is the possibility that by accessing medical care, their medical records could be used against them to detention and in deportation proceedings.

This has taken on new importance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accessing timely medical care, including accessible testing for SARS-CoV2 infection and vaccination against the virus, is crucial to ensuring that those who are infected can quarantine and that those who work and live amongst their families, communities, and co-workers do not spread the infection. Further, for those who are symptomatic, getting timely hospital care for pneumonia and other symptoms can mean the difference between life and death. Delaying this care due to fear of being detained by ICE at a healthcare facility or for fear that being tested, treated, or vaccinated for COVID-19 could expose their personal information can mean further spread of the infection, more severe illness, and more death. This poses both moral and a financial burdens on us all.

PO Box: 53313
1921 Florida Ave NW
Washington, DC 20009-9997

Media inquiries: press@drsforamerica.org
General inquiries: info@drsforamerica.org

 @drsforamerica

 @doctorsforamerica

 @doctorsforamerica

 @drsforamerica



We know how important timely medical treatment can be. Even more so, we know how important adequate preventive and prenatal care are to individuals, families, and communities in our state. When people do not get screening for diabetes and cancer, they suffer more severe complications – increasing their suffering, decreasing their contributions to society, costing all of us more – and can die from strokes, heart attacks, or untreated metastatic tumors. When women do not feel safe to access health care facilities during pregnancy and labor, complications can result during and after childbirth, including lifelong injury and chronic disease to the baby, or even maternal and child mortality. When vaccines cannot be accessed, people die from preventable diseases, and infections can spread in populations, leading to public health crises.

If patients believe that seeking care could put them at risk for detention, separation from their families, or deportation back to places where they may feel in danger, they will forego medical care. We need our patients, particularly those who are most on the margins of society, to feel safe to see us. It is for all of our collective benefit – financial, moral, and public health, to encourage them to do so. For this reason, we strongly encourage a favorable report on the Trust Act.

Yours sincerely,

Justin Lowenthal
Director of Partnerships & External Strategy
Member, National Board of Directors
Co-Chair, Maryland State Chapter
410-474-6939 - justin.lowenthal@drsforamerica.org

PO Box: 53313
1921 Florida Ave NW
Washington, DC 20009-9997

Media inquiries: press@drsforamerica.org
General inquiries: info@drsforamerica.org

 @drsforamerica

 @doctorsforamerica

 @doctorsforamerica

 @drsforamerica