

Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee

March 3, 2021

HB 304 - State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement

FAVORABLE

To Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and Committee members,

My name is Karl Bickel and I live in Frederick County, Maryland, in District 4. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 304, the Trust Act, to prevent local law enforcement from partnering with ICE, and rebuild relationships between law enforcement and the immigrant community.

As you know, immigrants in Maryland have been targeted by unjust federal immigration enforcement, with the assistance of state and local law enforcement officers who are deputized through the 287(g) program. From the beginning, 287(g) programs have led to countless stories of racial profiling and discrimination, harassment, and illegal stops, arrests, and detainment. The impact of these unjust policies is not just felt by individuals but threatens entire communities. When Maryland families and residents live in fear of interacting with police, it makes everyone unsafe.

With a background in policing spanning nearly 50 years and as a 2018 candidate for sheriff of Frederick County, I have taken a close look at the 287(g) program in an effort to discern its benefit to local law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. I believe the considerable harm done outweighs any limited benefit. The harm done to local police and the relationship with the communities they protect and serve far outweighs any benefit derived from 287(g).

The 287(g) program is antithetical to the philosophy of community policing. It undermines trust between police and neighborhoods they serve in the communities where it is most needed, in order to build the relationships necessary for collaborative problem solving, a cornerstone of community policing.

In Frederick County we have experienced the negative effects of 287(g) ranging from racial profiling and discrimination to harassment, illegal stops, arrests, and detainment that have led to two civil actions. Santos v Frederick County Commissioners http://sblog.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Santos-v-Frederick-County-13-706_Brief-in-Opposition.pdf and Medrano v Jenkins <https://www.aclu-md.org/en/press-releases/victory-lawsuit-over-frederick-county-sheriffs-racial-profiling-latinx-people> both of which found racial profiling and unlawful detainment had taken place.

287(g) has produced a negative image of our community. It has attracted protests against the program and produced divisiveness as it undermined trust in law enforcement in our county over this issue.

Professional leaders in major local law enforcement agencies have denounced local law enforcement involvement in 287(g). The following professional organizations have taken a position against the enforcement of immigration laws by local law enforcement; The International Association of Chiefs of Police, Major Cities/Counties Chiefs Association, Police Executive Research Forum, and the Police Foundation.

For years now, Marylanders from across the state have testified in the General Assembly why our state should not continue to partner with ICE. We need to send a clear message that immigrants are safe and welcome here, and that their Constitutional rights and dignity are protected.

Many local jurisdictions have already passed Trust policies, and now is the time for Maryland to protect immigrants everywhere across our state. With the General Assembly focused on reforming police practices this session, we need to ensure that immigrants are not excluded from these historic reforms.

Now is the time to pass Trust, so that Maryland fully acknowledges the humanity of our fellow immigrant neighbors, and keeps all our communities safe.

I urge a favorable vote on HB 304.

Sincerely,

Karl W. Bickel

Karl W. Bickel
11830 Browningsville Road
Monrovia, MD 21770