



**Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood**

**Committee:** Judiciary

**Testimony on:** HB0304 - State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** March 3, 2021

**Bill Contact:** Delegate Wanika Fisher

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep its members healthy and safe in a clean environment, uplift residents in all of our communities, and promote equity across all of our diverse communities. DTMG strongly supports HB0304 because it will increase public health and safety for all Maryland residents.

Maryland is home to people of many different backgrounds. According to the American Immigration Council, one in seven Maryland residents is an immigrant, one in eight residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent, and more than 126,000 U.S. citizens in Maryland – including about 7 percent of children in Maryland -- live with at least one family member who is undocumented. Fifteen percent of the Maryland population is foreign-born, and about 5 percent of the total Maryland population was undocumented in 2016. Maryland is home to thousands of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, primarily in Montgomery and Prince George's County and in the Baltimore area.

Maryland's documented and undocumented immigrants contribute significantly to our society and our economy, paying billions of dollars in state and local taxes and spending tens of billions of dollars in our businesses every year. Twenty to 30 percent of workers in construction, accommodation and food services, administrative and support services, waste management, and other service industries are immigrants. Importantly, undocumented immigrants were about 6 percent of Maryland's workforce in 2016.

It is vitally important – now more than ever during a virus pandemic -- that all of our residents, particularly our documented and undocumented immigrant neighbors, trust Maryland government and state and local law enforcement and public health officials. All Maryland residents need to be confident that they can come forward to report crimes, get healthcare, go to work and court appointments, and see their families without fear of being detained by police and turned over to Federal Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE) agents. HB0304 will improve community

trust in Maryland government and law enforcement by prohibiting law enforcement and correctional agents from

- inquiring about an individual's citizenship, immigration status, or place of birth
- detaining an individual in order to investigate the individual's citizenship or immigration status
- providing to the Federal government or another state information that will be used for a registry of individuals on the basis of religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, or national or ethnic origin or for immigration enforcement.
- transferring an individual to Federal immigration authorities unless required by Federal law or a judicial warrant.

Local Maryland tax dollars should not be spent on Federal programs. The primary way ICE works is to partner with local police. The mission of our local police is to work in partnership with the community to identify and resolve issues that impact public safety. Cooperation with civil immigration enforcement undermines community trust in law enforcement and undermines its mission.

Fear of deportation makes it less likely that immigrants will report crimes they witness in their neighborhoods and access the healthcare they need. For Maryland to attain its economic and educational goals, it is vital that we have widespread testing, surveillance, and vaccinations for COVID 19 so we can achieve herd immunity and get life back to normal. Fear of apprehension and detention among immigrant communities could be a barrier to appropriate actions to achieve herd immunity. Passage of HB0304 will go a long way to removing such barriers.

Maryland must protect the human rights of *all* its residents, not merely citizens. Trust Acts exist in over 400 jurisdictions around the country, including in conservative states such as Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, and Texas. It has been well documented that crime is reduced and healthcare is improved in jurisdictions with strong Trust Acts. Trust policies create a safer community for everyone.

For all these reasons, DoTheMostGood strongly supports HB0304 and recommends a **FAVORABLE** report on this important bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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