

**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 Annette Breiling and I live in Frederick County, Maryland, in District 4. As an educator and a person of faith, I write in support of HB 304, the Trust Act, to prevent local law enforcement from partnering with ICE, and to rebuild relationships between law enforcement and the immigrant community.

As an educator who has devoted a career to advancing the well-being of children, I have been deeply concerned for a number of years with the adverse effect on children of deporting adults from their family network whose offenses have been minor, such as traffic violations, and whose impact on society has been no more harmful than comparable offenses by “legal” citizens.

As a person of faith, I am committed to honoring God in each and every human being, and in loving our neighbors as ourselves; the current reality of how the 287(g) policy is carried out in Frederick County has been contrary to my moral values. Citizens here have been given the misinformation that 287(g) keeps the county safer. But a comparison of crime rates in our county with those in Montgomery and Prince George County, which do not have 287(g), show that crime has declined at a greater rate in those counties than in ours.

From the beginning, 287(g) programs have led to countless stories of racial profiling and discrimination, harassment, and illegal stops, arrests, and detainment, including from my own Hispanic housemate, who was pulled over and harshly threatened with arrest until she was able to establish her citizenship. 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.

The sacred scriptures of the Jewish, Christian, Islamic traditions, as well as many other world religions, speak of taking care of the immigrant in the land. The moral teaching is clear. Modern psychology offers another perspective – the children of these families torn apart when parents are deported suffer greatly from the cumulative effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). As a person of faith, I call on you to stop this abuse of the justice system which criminalizes and victimizes refugees and immigrants, and instead have mercy on them and help them pursue pathways toward becoming fully engaged citizens of Maryland for everyone’s benefit.

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.

I urge a favorable vote on HB 304.

Sincerely,

Annette Breiling
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