



SB 088/HB 304 - SUPPORT

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State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee/House Judiciary Committee

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Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of organizers and supporters of Sanctuary DMV, we support SB 088/HB 304, the State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement Act (the Maryland Trust Act), and urge this committee to report favorably on this legislation. Sanctuary DMV is an all-volunteer group that stands in solidarity with immigrant and marginalized communities based in Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia. Our mission is to support communities that are directly impacted by anti-immigrant policies and sentiments. We have witnessed first-hand the escalation of attacks against immigrant communities during the Trump administration and before. We have worked with Maryland families affected by detention, deportation, discrimination, and other forms of violence enacted against immigrant communities through state and federal policies.

The passage and implementation of the Trust Act is essential to secure the conditions of human dignity and safety that all people in Maryland deserve regardless of status or country of origin. We have seen how collaboration between local law enforcement and ICE, most egregiously in the context of 287(g) has resulted in the racial profiling, arbitrary targeting, and prolonged detention of immigrant communities. The primary goal of the Trust Act is to ensure that Maryland police are not cooperating in immigration enforcement actions on behalf of the federal government. This separation of police and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) functions is imperative to create communities in which residents can seek urgent help without risk of being turned over to ICE, and where all members of the community are treated equally in the criminal justice system regardless of immigration status. Meanwhile, due to such collaboration, immigrants who commit crimes often suffer an unnecessary and unjust double punishment; even before they have been convicted or after they serve their sentences, police and jails in Maryland still transfer them to ICE for detention and deportation. Every Maryland resident deserves the chance to live safely in their community, and ICE-police collaboration often takes that chance away.

This legislation is not only a practical matter, it is a moral one. Right now, especially since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, our neighbors are suffering and dying in immigration detention across the state. Individuals in the custody of ICE are routinely met with medical neglect,

isolation, and abuse at the hands of detention officials. Numerous reports have found the handling of the Covid-19 outbreak and medical care in detention facilities to be inadequate, leading to otherwise preventable deaths. But the routine crimes that Maryland police deal with should not be punishable by deportation or death. Our communities deserve to be protected from the federal government's inhumane detention and deportation machine, which tears families apart, puts people's lives in danger, and harms the wellbeing of the state of Maryland.

Sanctuary DMV has worked with individuals who were brought into ICE custody through contact with the police. We have had to rally material and emotional support for their families in the aftermath. We have seen first-hand the effect on families and especially children as caregivers go through the process of detention and deportation. The economic, psychological, and emotional cost is severe and long-lasting. In these cases, what would have otherwise been a simple infraction, resulted in unnecessary long-term suffering.

The Maryland Trust Act aims to put clear parameters on the role of police in enforcing immigration policy. This includes barring local law enforcement from 1) inquiring about immigration status or place of birth, 2) transferring people to ICE without a judicial warrant, 3) notifying ICE about immigrants' whereabouts, and 4) using local law enforcement resources for immigration enforcement. We urge you to act on behalf of the safety and wellbeing of our communities and support this legislation.

We urge a favorable report on SB 088/HB 304.