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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB304

State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement

My name is Ariel Greenberg and I have been a Maryland resident for twenty-five years. I have resided in District 21 for the past 5 years. This testimony is in support of HB304.

Many Maryland jurisdictions, including the two counties I have resided in, Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, have already passed local variations of the Trust Act. Several states have done so as well, including California and Connecticut. It is time for Maryland to follow suit.

As a Jew and as a descendent of Holocaust survivors, I am compelled to speak out against the mistreatment of refugees and immigrants in our communities. The Torah commands us to love and welcome the stranger: "You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:19) and "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Exodus 22:20). However, the state of Maryland has been cooperating with ICE, handing over data on our neighbors without warrants, rounding people up even as they seek refuge in places of worship, and standing by as ICE detains people in hospitals and schools. Maryland has done this willingly, as there is no requirement for our state to cooperate with federal agencies; it is a decision that our state has made in the past, and one that you, our representatives, can reverse.

But the Trust Act does not only answer a humane and moral call; the bill encapsulates policies that would improve the health and safety of Maryland residents in several ways, including by improving community relations with law enforcements, and by encouraging individuals to seek medical care and social and educational services. There are many studies that show the direct relationship between such policies and a decrease in crime, for example, a study by Christopher J. Lyons, María B. Vélez, Wayne A. Santoro, "Neighborhood Immigration, Violence, and City-Level Immigrant Political Opportunities" (2013) in which the researchers conclude that an "inverse relationship between immigrant concentration and neighborhood violent crime is generally enhanced in cities with favorable immigrant political opportunities... this occurs because favorable political contexts bolster social organization by enhancing trust and public social control within immigrant neighborhoods."

I urge you to stand up for the fundamental dignity of our immigrant neighbors, while strengthening the safety and health of our communities in the process. I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB304.

Ariel M. Greenberg