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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB304/SB88
State and Local Government- Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Nancy Riess

My name is Nancy Riess. I live in Baltimore, Maryland in District 42. This testimony is in support of HB304/SB88.

My Jewish tradition teaches me that it is our responsibility to welcome migrants. Jews have been migrants many times in our history, forced to leave unsafe political and economic conditions to save the lives of our families and communities. We understand what drives migrants to come here, and the consequences of being targeted as outsiders.

My own grandfather immigrated by ship in 1921, leaving behind his mother and sisters in a shtetl in Poland, in pursuit of a better life. He arrived speaking only basic English with a strong Yiddish accent and "strange" clothes. His strong accent and Jewish heritage put him at risk. He was subjected to ridicule in school and distrust by assimilated established Americans. Yet he relied on laws to protect him as he pursued education and protect his family and his fledgling pharmacy that eventually created wealth and stability for the generations to come. But what if, out of fear of recrimination or deportation, he did not report a crime or needed local government help in some other way? His business, his family, his livelihood would have been threatened and possibly violated. That is the situation this bill seeks to fix.

Really, my grandfather's story is no different than migrants seeking shelter in the US today. They arrive with accents and different clothes, but the same shared desire for a better life.

Maryland General Assembly members also represent countless immigrant stories - some uplifting and some demoralizing. Together we can facilitate a stable upwards trajectory for immigrants. The greater their success, the richer our society in shared values, financial sustainability, and the intricate web of life stories that comprise the American dream.

Passing HB304/SB88 creates trust within our community and can improve relations between police and immigrant communities. Passing this bill would also allow vulnerable immigrants to report threats to their safety, use available health and social services for their families, and enroll their children in school, thus creating physical and emotional stability and financial prosperity. Everyone deserves to feel safe.

I respectfully urge a favorable report for HB304/SB88.