



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT
COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEMBER

Jessica Fitzwater
Council Member, District 4

House Judiciary Committee
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 28, 2021

LETTER OF SUPPORT HB 0304 STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT – PARTICIPATION IN FEDERAL IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

Dear Chairman Clippinger, Vice-Chair Atterbeary, and Committee Members,

I write in support of HB 0304, the Trust Act.

Over the past twelve years, immigrant residents in Frederick County have been targeted by unjust federal immigration enforcement furthered by the assistance of local law enforcement officers and/or correctional officers who are deputized through the 287(g) program. It is well known that 287(g) programs across the country and here in Maryland have led to racial profiling and discrimination, harassment, and illegal stops, arrests, and detainment. One can look to the Santos (2008) and Medrano (2019) cases in Frederick County as examples. The impact of these unjust policies is not just felt deeply by individuals, but it also threatens entire communities. When Maryland families and residents live in fear of interacting with police, everyone is less safe.

As a new Council Member in 2015, one of my first actions was to lead the effort to repeal the xenophobic English-only ordinance that had previously been approved. Residents, business owners, educators, and advocates made it clear that this simply was not what Frederick County was all about. Since then, I have continued to prioritize listening to the needs and voices of our immigrant community, both documented and undocumented.

Our growing immigrant community is part of what makes Frederick County the vibrant, attractive place that it is. Unfortunately, our local law enforcement's partnership with ICE is not only in direct conflict with what Frederick County aspires to be, but also reduces trust in law enforcement and, as a by-product, impacts trust in local government in general.

Now is the time for Maryland to protect immigrant families everywhere across our state. With the General Assembly focused on reforming police practices this session, we need to ensure that our immigrant communities are not excluded from these historic reforms. Let us ensure that Maryland fully acknowledges the humanity of all its residents and prioritizes keeping every family safe.

I respectfully urge a favorable report from the committee on HB 0304.

Sincerely,

Jessica Fitzwater
Council Member, District 4