

**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 Juliana Downey, and I live in Frederick, Maryland, District 3B. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 304, the Trust Act, to prevent local law enforcement from partnering with ICE, and rebuild relationships between law enforcement and the immigrant community.

As a member of a local immigrants' advocacy organization, called the R.I.S.E. (Resources for Immigrant Support and Empowerment) Coalition of Western, MD, I have heard many, many varying accounts of the experiences of immigrants. As a former public school teacher for 10 years, many of these stories came from students I taught, who were Latinx immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants. I'm also a first generation American and grew up hearing my mother's stories of what it was like to come to America as a child. She spoke of how kind and generous Americans are. My mother's family (her parents and her siblings) were sponsored by a church in their immigration process. They helped them find housing and work when they arrived. Still, it took my grandparents years to gain legal citizenship. The process is long and costly. Unfortunately, my mother's stories stand in stark contrast to stories my former students told me of their own experiences. Even worse has been the stories of people in my own neighborhood, known as "La Cuarenta" (aka Route 40).

What many of my former students and immigrant neighbors have experienced is both heartbreaking and infuriating. They've shared with me countless stories of harassment. Stories of repeatedly being pulled over and questioned by law enforcement. One fellow RISE member experienced this 8 times in just a few years alone. They talk about disgruntled neighbors, sometimes even their employers, threatening to call ICE on them to get them deported. They do this even to people whose children are enrolled in school with my own child. These threats of family separation and deportation are profoundly traumatic for all, but most especially the children.

Unfortunately, Frederick has been unable to confront and uproot its racism, in part, because we still have policies and practices that are demonstrably white supremacist. This is the case with Frederick County Sheriff Jenkins' 287(g) agreement with ICE. These policies are weaponized to target Latinx immigrants who are simply trying to live, work, and raise children peacefully. They create trauma and tragedy for many families and put the safety of our entire community at risk.

Even by the sheriff's own data, the vast majority of people who have been processed through Frederick County's 287(g) agreement were stopped for minor traffic violations. In the last steering meeting Sheriff Jenkins held, over two year ago in 2018, *his* data shows only 21 out of the ~1,700 immigrants who have been processed through our local detention center under the 287(g) agreement were only "suspected of having links to gangs." Less than 90 were arrested for dangerous crimes. Targeting Black and Brown immigrants for traffic violations does not make our community safe—the opposite. It makes people fear law enforcement and they are then less likely to report crimes. This threatens the safety of all of us. It has also enabled two separate racial profiling lawsuits against the Frederick County Sheriff's Office, which have cost the taxpayers millions.

We should all agree that discrimination is wrong. And if there is a law the condones encourages law enforcement to target specific groups of people for a civil offense and treat it as a criminal offense, thereby punishing them more harshly than necessary, that's a discriminatory law. That is exactly what is happening under the 287(g) agreement with ICE. It's time for Maryland stand up affirm our commitment to justice for all and pass the Trust Act.

I urge a favorable vote on HB 304.

Sincerely,

Juliana Downey