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Testimony in Support of HB0304: Trust Act
State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement

My name is Rebecca Goldfinger. I live in Silver Spring in District 20. I am testifying in support of HB0304: Trust Act (State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement).

I am writing as a member of JUFJ and in allyship with CASA. As Jews, we are commanded to live by the Biblical words of Exodus 22:21: "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Like so many other Jews in this country, I am descended from brave people who left Eastern Europe to escape religious persecution and poverty. One of my maternal great-grandmothers left the Ukraine because of pogroms there and arrived in the United States at the age of seventeen, alone, speaking no English. Fortunately, she and my great-grandfather were lucky enough to achieve the American Dream of a better life for their descendents. But what if, instead, my forebears had been apprehended by ICE when taking a child to the hospital or dropping off a child at school? (These are two real-life examples in which immigrants were detained by ICE in Texas and Los Angeles, respectively.) It is critical that the immigrants who live in our midst be able to live in a law-abiding manner and not fear being detained by ICE, simply because they were doing the right thing by their children (e.g., taking them to school or the hospital) or because they were doing something to improve public safety like reporting an actual crime to law enforcement. (According to the Center for American Progress, Tom K. Wong, 1/26/17, "There are, on average, 35.5 fewer crimes committed per 10,000 people in sanctuary counties compared to nonsanctuary counties." This suggests that the Trust Act could improve public safety in Maryland.)

Because my own family were once strangers here, I empathize with people whose journeys from other places are a bit more recent than mine. I feel very strongly that we must not detain or deport immigrants, but rather allow them to establish themselves in American society, as my own family did.

For this reason, I support HB0304, which would end police partnership with ICE; protect immigrants from ICE in sensitive locations such as schools, courthouses and hospitals; ensure that community members can interact with police without fear of being harassed;

and stop law enforcement agencies from inquiring about immigration status, transferring/notifying to ICE or detaining on behalf of ICE.

I believe that as a country, we must stop wronging the immigrants in our midst, and I believe that this legislation is a step in the right direction. I hope that you will return a favorable vote for Bill HB0304. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Goldfinger