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Subject: Please Support HB 304 - State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement

To Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary and Committee members

I wish to voice my support for the Trust Act, HB304.

I live in Frederick County, where the collaboration of local law enforcement with ICE has long had a deleterious effect on community safety. Crime rates have been steadily falling in neighboring counties, but in Frederick County this trend has lagged well behind our neighbors. This disparity in falling crime rates between counties which do or do not assist ICE is unsurprising. Numerous studies have shown that when local law enforcement actively cooperates with ICE, a large percentage of immigrant communities will not volunteer information to police willingly or even report crimes when they are victimized. When immigrants justifiably fear local law enforcement more than they fear criminals, law enforcement is crippled while criminals enjoy much greater freedom, and thus Frederick County crime rates have remained higher than surrounding counties.

My experience as an engineer at one of the largest defense contracting employers in Maryland has underscored for me that immigrants make great contributions to productivity. Contrary to what some have said – other countries are in fact “sending their best”. Certainly, in all Science, Technology, Engineering and Math fields, this has been true to the point that some other countries now require their students to return to their native land, to prevent the so-called “brain drain” that has benefitted the US for decades. I believe this is true not just in STEM fields but in general – that we are getting mainly their best; those who were ambitious enough and brave enough to overcome great obstacles in order to find better opportunities. Most immigrants bring ambition, energy and determination to succeed, to the benefit of the communities where they settle. Yet the effect of cooperation between our local law enforcement and ICE is to drive such desirable community members to other more welcoming communities. This pandemic is especially not a time we should want to discourage such energetic determined people from staying in our community, given the economic impacts of Covid-19. We can use all the determined entrepreneurship we can get.

Therefore, as a resident of Frederick County where this counter-productive approach to law enforcement has been ongoing, I wish to see the situation rectified so that my county can enjoy the same prosperity and falling crime rates of neighboring counties with vibrant immigrant communities

Sincerely,

Dr. Karen Mary Siegrist
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