

Testimony in Support of HB 304 (SB 88) – State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement.

To: Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: February 26, 2021

I am a long-time resident of Maryland, and I thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 304, State and Local Government – Participation in Immigration Enforcement.

The current practices in some jurisdictions of allowing police to enforce federal immigration law by inquiring about immigration status and detaining immigrants in cooperation with ICE have created mistrust among immigrants, who are reluctant to report crimes and provide important information for solving them. This lack of trust has obvious repercussions on general public safety. In addition, this bill's requirement that the Attorney General develop guidelines for schools, hospitals, and courthouses to limit civil immigration enforcement will enhance immigrant participation in important areas impacting public welfare. Especially now, for the wellbeing of the general population during this devastating pandemic, vaccine sites should also be labeled as safe locations for all who wish to be vaccinated without fear of intrusive police inquiry into immigration status.

My Unitarian Universalist faith tradition values welcoming the stranger with dignity, respect, and compassion. Needlessly destroying families and traumatizing children through unwarranted deportation is against our beliefs in the moral conduct of government. The cruel treatment of immigrants is especially unfair, since we know that immigrants on the whole commit fewer crimes than native-born citizens and that jurisdictions with policies and laws such as HB 304 have lower crime rates than those without.

Please support to this important bill, which will benefit all Marylanders.

Sincerely,
Stephen Eckstrand
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