

Testimony in Support of HB 304  
The Trust Act  
House Judiciary Committee

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Good afternoon Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chairman Atterbeary and members of the House Judiciary Committee. It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to testify in support of The Trust Act, House Bill 304. I live in Mt. Rainier and have been a resident of Prince George's County since 1979. I have three children who have graduated from the public high schools. I have been a member of the American Public Health Association (APHA) for 40 years and practiced medicine in the county at Prince George's Hospital Center from 1996 until 2015. Recently I have been volunteering with Mount Rainier Organizing for Racial Equality (MORE).

The immigrants in our town and county contribute to the life of our community in many ways and are our friends and neighbors. For example we recently raised money for the food pantry with a "Pupusa Sale" that was fun and bolstered our neighborhood morale during the pandemic. The workers remodeling my basement bathroom are hardworking and efficient and I would not want them harassed on my street by local police. Of course I do not know their immigration status, only that they are doing a great job. Mount Rainier is a diverse town and I am grateful that my children had the opportunity to go to Thomas Stone Elementary and make lifelong friends from all walks of life. Our soccer teams also benefitted from the expertise and experience of our immigrant community!

The Trust Act is essential to protect our immigrant communities. As a physician I was well aware of issues in access to health care and funding for many of my patients. In Mount Rainier I have been helping with the food pantry and rental assistance programs and have become more aware of the stress that fear of ICE creates among our residents. Residents who have been suffering during the COVID-19 pandemic are afraid to reach out for help or even to approach the police when issues arise. This act will limit the ability of the police to inquire about a person's immigration status, citizenship status or place of birth during routine police encounters. Police will not be able to detain or transfer our residents to ICE without a judicial warrant. The detention of a recent resident who appeared in court for a traffic violation will be much more difficult for ICE if the police do not inform ICE about such residents.

These provisions of the bill will help restore community trust and some studies have showed that such legislation is associated with lower crime rates and stronger economies. ICE is a federal agency and we do not need to use our resources to enforce federal immigration policies. Nor is there any legal requirement to do so. The Fourth Amendment has been weakened in many ways in other court rulings but both the Supreme Court and the Fourth Circuit Court have found that the local police and sheriffs do not have independent authority to arrest based on a civil immigration violation.

Thank you for supporting The Trust Act and for respecting our friends and neighbors.