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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB304

State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement

My name is Deborah Rosenfelt. I was born in Baltimore, and have been a resident of University Park in District 22 for 30 years. I am Professor Emerita at the University of Maryland, and I am writing today as a member of Bend the Arc, Prince George's County Moral Minyan, and of Sanctuary DMV. I also am active in YANA (You Are Not Alone), the political action group of Fabangan Cheder Community.

One of the cornerstone principles of the progressive Jewish tradition to which I belong is "Tikkun Olam," a mandate to repair the world. I take that commitment seriously. My father, a doctor, was too old to be drafted during World War II, but he wanted to serve anyway and volunteered. As a captain, he headed a field hospital just behind the front lines, and then after VE Day, was placed in charge of a liberated labor camp. I did not meet him until I was almost three years old, and he was not a well man when he returned, suffering from what we would now call Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome. I learned to be very proud of my father's bravery and his commitment to fighting against the Nazis for freedom. He would be horrified if he were alive today at the development of quasi-fascist structures of surveillance and policing, enabled by the cooperation between state law enforcement and ICE. ICE's practices punish struggling human beings for seeking personal, economic, and social refuge in this country, subject them to state surveillance and terror, divide their families, and deport them often without benefit of legal help.

I know personally some undocumented individuals, and I know of many others, who are living productive lives, contributing economically and culturally to my community. Some work in our homes, and are seeking paths to citizenship. Many work in the currently-devastated culinary industry in Prince George's County, and have been instrumental in managing and staffing small family-owned restaurants—as I know from working on a food pipeline in the county designed both to support restaurants and secure meals for hungry families.

I know several individuals who will not receive their Covid 19 vaccinations because of their fear (not entirely unjustified under current laws) that hospitals and clinics will be used by ICE to identify and deport them. It is absolutely unconscionable to raid, terrorize, detain and deport people like these. And clearly, it hurts not only them, but our larger communities.

Prince George's County, and many other jurisdictions, have already passed legislation similar to HB304. This legislation is an important step in protecting and supporting vulnerable people who have much to contribute. PLEASE SUPPORT THIS LEGISLATION, and add the State of Maryland to those states and jurisdictions opting for both justice and mercy. I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB304.

Respectfully,

Deborah Rosenfelt