

**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee
March 3, 2021**

**HB 304 - State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration
Enforcement**

FAVORABLE

To Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and Committee members

Our names are Jo Harte and Robert Horrall, and we've lived in a conservative, rural area of Frederick County, in District 8, for more than 30 years. We're submitting this testimony in support of HB 304, the Trust Act, to add our voices to the voices of countless others who deplore and protest the grievous harms to the immigrant community and other minorities resulting from local law enforcement's voluntary participation with ICE in the 287(g) program.

Our current sheriff's enthusiasm for the program, and willingness to use it both legally and illegally (as confirmed by several court rulings) in an effort to prevent "the browning of America" and "the destruction of American culture"--his actual words in settings where he felt safe using them--have been especially harmful. In the eyes of many of us, they represent an officially ignored humanitarian crisis.

A chance encounter and brief working relationship with the high school aged son of one of our sheriff's deputies made me more aware than ever of the depth and complexity of the problem. While we canvassed together for the current sheriff's opponent during the run-up to the 2018 midterm elections, I learned that his father and many of his father's co-workers (both deputies and other staff members) want nothing more than to see an end to the indignities and outright cruelties of the 287(g) program, especially as applied by their boss and his ally, the country's former president, but that any open acknowledgment or communication of their viewpoint would be bound to result in severe retribution, including the loss of the jobs they undertook "to protect and serve" all the members of their community, and which they still need in order to support their families.

Along with growing numbers of others in our fast-changing county, they recognize that no segment of the population has been contributing more to our social and economic well being; no others provide us with more essential supports, protections, and services--agricultural, environmental, medical, child and elder related, technological and scientific to name a few. And yet, no others receive fewer supports, protections and services in return.

If the time has ever been right to equip present and future generations with the ability to appreciate, learn from, and live in a mutually beneficial way with people different from themselves, isn't this it? Haven't we seen enough of what encouraging fantasy (even

delusion), fear, and distrust of the other can do? Wasn't the recent election in large part a referendum on that choice?

Like almost all of you who will determine the fate of this proposed legislation, we owe our lives and well being, and the lives and well being of our children and grandchildren and their descendants, to our country's history of welcoming refugees and other immigrants. And like all or most of you we recognize and welcome the possibility of this moment to move our county, state and country a step closer to making good on its too long deferred dream and promise of liberty and justice for all.

Sincerely,

Jo Harte and Bob Horrall
Frederick, Maryland