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BILL NO:	House Bill 1476
TITLE:	Labor and Employment - Disclosure of Employee's Immigration Status – Prohibition
COMMITTEE:	Economic Matters
HEARING DATE:	February 27, 2025
POSITION:	<b>SUPPORT</b>

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The Women's Law Center of Maryland is dedicated to ensuring the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women throughout the state. We urge a favorable report for House Bill 1476 and support the expanded mandate of the Commissioner of Labor and Industry to levy civil penalties on employers who abuse their positions of power to silence immigrant employees reporting legal violations.

HB 1476 prohibits an employer from disclosing or threatening to disclose an employee's immigration status to a public body for the purpose of concealing their company's violation of certain labor, benefit, or tax laws. When an employee complains about an employer's violation of these certain laws, anti-retaliation protections often kick in to protect the employee from being punished for speaking out. However, an employer's retaliatory actions may extend beyond the workplace. In some cases, the employer may try to use the employee's immigration status as a tool to dissuade them from pursuing their claims. HB 1476 codifies for Maryland workers what several courts – *Centeno-Bernuy v. Perry* (W.D.N.Y. 2003), *Singh v. Jutla* (N.D. Cal. 2002), *Bartolon-Perez v. Island Granite and Stone, Inc.* (S.D. Fla. 2015), and more – have found, that this kind of conduct can constitute unlawful retaliation.

Exploitative employers leverage the threat of disclosing immigration status because they understand that U.S. immigration enforcement is, at best, the violent separation of families – and at worst, legalized murder. Widespread neglect continues to cause loss of life in immigration detention, immigration enforcement agents kill migrants with virtual impunity, and immigration law ensures courts routinely order people deported to their deaths. In its 2022 decision *Egbert v. Boule*, the U.S. Supreme Court confirmed this reality by not only limiting judicial remedies for constitutional violations, but also sanctioning the use of force as a routine function of immigration enforcement.

While Maryland cannot fix the nation's immigration regime, we can protect our workers – both domestic and foreign born – from retaliation for reporting violations of Maryland's labor, benefit, and tax laws. These types of violations do not happen in a vacuum. This bill not only protects our immigrant communities, HB1476 protects all Marylanders from unscrupulous business practices and tax avoidance, which harm everyone. For all these reasons, we urge a favorable report for HB 1476.

*The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.*