

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 828

SB 828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee

March 4, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

I, Rev. Charlene Belsom Zellmer, am pleased to offer a favorable testimony in strong support of SB 828- Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act).

For nearly a decade, I have worked in the community for justice, equity, and fairness for our immigrant neighbors and siblings. As an interfaith minister, I have witnessed the generosity of faith communities, local organizations, schools, healthcare facilities, and neighbors throughout our State, without regard to immigration status. These expressions of inclusion represent the values that I live and work by and that I have come to expect of Marylanders. As a leader in hosting a woman who was forced to take Sanctuary in Montgomery County during the last Trump administration, I can attest to the comfort that she and her family and our hundreds of volunteers felt knowing that they were relatively safe from ICE enforcement at the congregation while she proceeded with her asylum case. I am determined to protect this expression of safety in our community by maintaining the designation of sensitive locations. Rescinding this vital protection for the families I serve would cause undue fear and potential hardship as they try to worship, receive healthcare, attend school events and go to work among other day-to-day activities so vital to maintaining their routine lives in our State.

For over a decade, federal policy limited Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activities in sensitive locations—such as hospitals, schools, courthouses, and places of worship—to prevent intimidation and ensure access to essential services. However, as of January 20, 2025, the revocation of these protections has left immigrant communities vulnerable to enforcement actions in spaces where they should feel safe.

This shift has already created an environment of fear and uncertainty, discouraging individuals from seeking medical care, pursuing education, accessing legal resources, or engaging with law enforcement. As a result, our communities, public health, and overall safety are at risk.

Everyone should access essential services without fear of detention or separation. Public safety improves when immigrants feel safe reporting crimes and seeking help. Clear enforcement boundaries build trust, strengthening communities and institutions. **For these reasons, I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 828.**

Sincerely,

**Rev. Charlene Belsom Zellmer, MDiv
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