

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,

Below is my favorable testimony in strong support of SB 828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act).

Until recently, I worked for the Department of Health and Human Services to improve healthcare, particularly for diverse populations. I strove to make healthcare more accessible to people who speak different languages and come from different cultures. Now the current administration aims to make essential services like healthcare and education hostile environments. Immigrants face substantial barriers to obtaining services even when they are not threatened with detention and deportation. There is no question in my mind that if we do not stop Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) from entering and disrupting sensitive areas, people will avoid these places and suffer as a result.

For over a decade, federal policy limited 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.

It is not the first time immigration policy has been used for political purposes, but now it is even worse. In the 1980's the Reagan administration denied refugee status to people fleeing dangerous regimes that the U.S. was supporting. A sanctuary movement sprang up with churches and synagogues providing protection and shelter to these refugees. Now the current administration would violate even the sanctity of houses of worship and hunt people down where they pray.

Already I have heard of neighbors avoiding going to health clinics or to their children's school out of fear. If we do not act to protect these sensitive places, our communities, public health, and overall safety will be at risk. Everyone should be able to access essential services without fear of detention or separation. Clear enforcement boundaries build trust, strengthening communities and institutions. For these reasons, **I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 828.**