



HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY

FAVORABLE

SB 977 – State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 19, 2025

Health Care for the Homeless supports SB 977, which seeks to require a law enforcement agency or a unit of State or local government to deny access to certain databases, facilities, or buildings by certain individuals seeking access for the purpose of enforcing federal immigration law.

Health Care for the Homeless is a federally qualified health center, providing comprehensive health care and housing services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and housing instability in the Baltimore area. We provide services to everyone, regardless of immigration status, and we do not collect immigration status information, both as a matter of law and as a matter of values. We know, anecdotally, that our clients have a whole range of immigration statuses. We also know that many clients we serve also rely on critical public benefits and social safety programs for their health and safety. The efficacy of services that Health Care for the Homeless provides will be compromised if access to these other services clients rely on is compromised. Allowing access to clients' sensitive information will undoubtedly compromise those services because it will have a significant chilling effect because of the fear of deportation and other immigration proceedings. This chilling effect will go far beyond the public services that people receive at the locations and entities contemplated by this bill – it will also have a chilling effect at the other places they receive services, including Health Care for the Homeless. This will have a significant impact on the health and well-being of full communities who forgo these critical services due to understandable fear for what will happen to them and their families.

Immigrant families should be able to access critical government services without worrying that their information will be shared with federal immigration authorities. We need this bill so that immigration enforcement is limited from obtaining warrantless access to state and local agency databases.

We urge a favorable report.

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We deliver medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, housing support services, and housing for over 11,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

Our Vision: Everyone is healthy and has a safe home in a just and respectful community.

Our Mission: We work to end homelessness through racially equitable health care, housing and advocacy in partnership with those of us who have experienced it.

For more information, visit www.hchmd.org.