

All Immigrants Should Be Able to Access Essential Services Without Fear

Position Statement Supporting Senate Bill 828

Given before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Immigrants make up a significant portion of Maryland's population and are an essential part of the state's community and economy contributing to the workforce, tax base and innovation. As members of our communities, access to essential services for all immigrants is important because it helps improve their health and wellbeing and ensures their children are educated, all of which benefits our state. **The Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports Senate Bill 828 because it will ensure that immigrants aren't deterred from accessing crucial services due to fear of immigration enforcement.**

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.

Just over 1 million immigrants reside in Maryland working sectors across our state's economy. About 36 percent of Main Street business owners in Maryland are immigrants, operating storefront shops that help keep downtown areas vibrant. About 21 percent of Maryland's workers are immigrants including 33 percent of child care workers, 29 percent of registered nurses and 27 percent of software developers¹.

Immigrant workers and business owners generate \$85 billion of economic output in Maryland. In fact, when immigrants move to Maryland the economy grows and this doesn't mean fewer jobs, it means more jobs, more consumers, more workers and more business owners. All Marylanders have benefitted from state policies that make our state a welcoming place for immigrants.

The Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act because it will:

1. **Protect Access to Essential Services:** No one should have to choose between life-saving medical care and the risk of family separation. Children deserve to attend school without fear, and individuals must be able to seek justice in our courts without the threat of detention.

2. **Enhance Public Safety:** When immigrants feel safe accessing services and reporting crimes, our entire community benefits. Fear of enforcement discourages individuals from cooperating with law enforcement, which in turn hampers public safety efforts.
3. **Strengthen Community Trust:** By establishing clear boundaries for immigration enforcement, we foster trust between immigrant communities and the institutions meant to serve them. This trust is essential for maintaining a healthy, vibrant, and cohesive society.

The Maryland Center on Economic Policy urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings committee to make a favorable report on SB 828.

ⁱ Immigration Research Institute, Immigrants are a Vital Part of Maryland's Future .