

Date of Hearing: February 19th

Alyssa Duda, LCSW-C
Silver Spring, MD 20902

TESTIMONY ON (SB977/HB1431) - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Maryland Data Privacy Act

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

FROM: Alyssa Duda, LCSW-C

My name is Alyssa Duda. I am a resident of District 18, writing in strong support of SB977/HB1431, the Maryland Data Privacy Act.

I am a proud resident of a diverse neighborhood in Wheaton, MD which includes a number of immigrants and their families. I am a business owner of a mental health private practice and am pleased to offer a favorable testimony in strong support of SB 977/ HB 143. In my private practice, I provide mental health support to many of whom are impacted by the erosion of data protection. I support them with the harmful and negative impact on their well-being, mental health, families and livelihoods. Additionally, I am involved with organizations such as Doctors for Camp Closure, Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid and have a long history of serving asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, documented migrants, their families and their support communities through direct service such as a school social worker, a mental health provider as well as in community mutual aid. I have seen and learned first-hand the detriment that not having data protection has not only on myself as an individual living within the state but the terror, fear and inability to engage in a community in a meaningful way has on my immigrant neighbors, colleagues and clients.

In recent years, the erosion of data privacy protections has led to increased fear and uncertainty within immigrant communities. The Maryland Data Privacy Act SB 977/ HB 1431 takes critical steps to restore trust by ensuring that state and local agencies, as well as law enforcement entities, are prohibited from sharing personal information, facial recognition data, and access to public facilities with federal immigration authorities unless a valid warrant is presented. I have seen first hand when these communities begin to fear how access to their data or their spaces compromises safety, disrupts essential lifesaving services and creates fear among the people I serve. I work with parents who are afraid to send their children to school or allow their children to receive access to services that are essential in eliminating childhood hunger such as free breakfast or lunch programs. I work with teenagers who have become so depressed about their future and the lack of safety in their world that they have become suicidal and are afraid to turn to the places where they usually seek support because they fear this will somehow identify them to authorities. I work with one woman who has stopped accessing essential medical care out of fear of how her data will be used and lack of protection in hospital spaces. Another family fears registering their vehicles or updating their Maryland ID's due to the fear of the unknown of how their data will be used or accessed. These families and individuals desperately want to participate in their communities and not only abide by regulations and law but be allowed to help

our community flourish by building businesses and educating their children. The passing of this bill would help ensure that these individuals and families would be allowed to safely access lifesaving medical care, their right to education or their rights to worship as well as support our communities in continuing to grow and thrive.

I, Alyssa Duda, stands with immigrant communities and supports the Maryland Data Privacy Act because it will:

- Limit Access to databases and facilities: Law enforcement agencies and state or local government unites must deny access to sensitive data and facilities to individuals seeking to enforce federal immigration law without a valid court issued warrant
- Protect Personal Information: The Act prohibits the disclosure of personal data, photographs, and biometric data, such as facial recognition scans, to federal immigration authorities unless due to legal processes are followed.
- Provide Accountability and Transparency: Agencies must maintain records of all access requests and submit annual reports to the Attorney General and General Assembly to ensure compliance and transparency
- Ensure Enforcement and Penalties: The Attorney General is empowered to enforce these protections, with civil penalties for violations and disciplinary actions for state employees who fail to comply.

This legislation is crucial not only for protecting the privacy of ALL Maryland residents but also for fostering trust between immigrant communities and public institutions. By clearly delineating the boundaries of federal immigration enforcement within our state we promote values of dignity, safety and fairness.

In 2021, this legislature took action to protect immigrants and safeguard their sensitive data. I, Alyssa Duda and Healing Pathways Counseling and Consulting LLC, once again calls on this legislature to act. I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 977/ HB 1431.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Duda, LCSW-C