

STATEMENT OF
Eric E. Sterling, J.D.¹
SUBMITTED TO
THE MARYLAND SENATE
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS
HON. WILLIAM C. SMITH, JR., CHAIR
HON. JEFF WALDSTREICHER, VICE CHAIR
MARCH 4, 2025

IN FAVOR OF
SB828 -- Immigration Enforcement – Sensitive Locations – Guidelines and Policies
(Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, Distinguished Senators, I support SB828 and urge you to give this urgently need legislation a favorable report. I heartily commend Chair Smith and Delegate Wilkins for their leadership in developing this urgently needed legislation.

For decades, the explicit policy of the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has been to not conduct immigration enforcement raids or arrests at protected or sensitive locations, such as places of worship. Upon the inauguration of President Donald J. Trump, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced that it would step up immigration enforcement and that it would consider tracking down persons who may be suspected of being in violation of U.S. immigration laws at houses of worship, schools or other places. On January 21, 2025, the Department of Homeland Security (the Department) announced that it was revoking the established protected location policy and would rely upon immigration enforcement agents to rely upon their “common sense” and could go into any place where “criminal aliens” could “hide.”

My faith community, the Bethesda Friends Meeting, is part of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) (BYM). On January 27, 2025, BYM joined other Friends organizations and other faith communities to [sue the Department in U.S. District Court for Maryland](#) (Civil Action No. 25-0243-TDC) to enjoin the Department from carrying out the new policy that would no longer recognize the historically protected places. The policy said,

“Criminals will no longer be able to hide in America’s schools and churches to avoid arrest. The Trump Administration will not tie the hands of our brave law enforcement, and instead trusts them to use common sense.”

We have had members of Quaker Meetings for Worship (what our congregations call themselves) speculate about the potential for ICE agents to enter or lie in wait to apprehend

persons coming to worship with us. Other faith communities joined this lawsuit with similar concerns.

On February 24, 2025, U.S. District Judge Theodore D. Chuang issued [a 59-page memorandum opinion](#) granting a preliminary injunction against the Department to stop it from terminating its long-standing protected location policy.

In the face of the new Department policy, and the history of protecting sensitive locations from immigration enforcement, this legislation is most timely. The bill directs Maryland’s Attorney General to develop guidelines “to limit immigration enforcement at sensitive locations to the fullest extent possible consistent with federal and state law.” The legislation very capably defines “sensitive location” to include places of worship, schools, medical facilities, child care facilities and playgrounds, places that provide social services such as drug treatment facilities, places where disaster or emergency response relief and services are provided, etc.

I am joining today with Quaker Voice of Maryland in supporting SB828.

I urge a favorable report.

¹ Eric E. Sterling is a member of the Ministry and Worship Committee of Bethesda Friends Meeting, Bethesda, MD. He testifying on his own behalf. He was Executive Director of the Criminal Justice Policy Foundation (1989-2020). He has lived in Maryland 32 years and the 18th legislative district over 27 years. From 1979 to 1989 he was Assistant Counsel, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary responsible for many criminal justice issues. From 2013 to 2017, on the appointment of Gov. Martin O’Malley, he served on the Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission and chaired its Policy Committee. From 2022 to 2024, he was Chair the Montgomery County Advisory Commission on Policing. He received a B.A. from Haverford College in 1973, and a J.D. from Villanova University Law School in 1976.