

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 828/HB1006
SB 828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and
Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 28, 2025

SB: Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

Yesenia Lopez is pleased to offer **a favorable testimony in strong support of HB 1006/SB828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act).**

I am a teacher in Prince George's County Public Schools. Our district houses a diverse immigrant population from Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. Our district has a large number of community schools and these schools provide many benefits to the community, such as health services, after-school tutoring, and food services as well. I grew up in this area with my family, my siblings and I have attended the schools here, and have received these community services in the past. My family has migrated from Mexico for better opportunities and this aided me in my journey to become a high school English teacher. This issue is important to me because I have many family members and numerous students on my roster who would also be affected by SB 828/HB 1006.

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.

As an English teacher, I work with students who come from immigrant families as well as immigrant students themselves. My students have shared their fear of coming home from work and not knowing where their family is or not being able to come up from being detained. A few of my students have disclosed their family's immigration status and have stated that they live in fear of being separated from their parents. If Immigration and Customs Enforcement enters our

schools, students would stop attending school due to fear, and this would affect student attendance rates. I would not be able to teach my subject, I would not be able to assist my students in their journey to graduating high school, and they would not be able to graduate which would harm our community's efforts for improvement.

Yesenia Lopez stands with immigrant communities and 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.

Yesenia Lopez **urges the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 828/HB 1006.**