



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony
SB977 - State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)
February 19, 2025
SUPPORT

TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Chair; The Honorable Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair; and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Dr. Jeffery Johnson, Chair, Montgomery County Community Action Board

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County's local, state, and federally designated anti-poverty group, strongly supports SB977, which would deny access to databases maintained by law enforcement and other state and local entities, along with their physical buildings, if they appear to be accessing the databases for immigration enforcement purposes, unless they have a warrant. Individuals accessing these buildings would need to share their name, contact information, and if the individual does not have a warrant, they would also need to provide a statement indicating that they are not entering the building for immigration enforcement purposes. SB977 prohibits law enforcement and local and state entities from entering into MOUs or similar agreements to collaborate with federal immigration enforcement.

As the governing body for the Montgomery County Community Action Agency, we continue to hear about the terrible local impacts of immigration policies and proposals established at the federal level. Many of the residents served by the Takoma-East Silver Spring (TESS) Community Action Center, Navigation Team, and the agency's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program are living in fear. Too many of our neighbors are terrified to seek services they desperately need because of concerns about their immigration status. In a recent SNAP clinic for example, every resident in attendance expressed concerns about what would happen to their information. We've also heard from partner organizations that are receiving a record number of requests for "Know Your Rights" trainings. Food distribution programs have seen their numbers drop and some have even moved food distribution events inside so that participants feel safer picking up groceries. Policies, including the ones proposed in SB977, can help to alleviate some of the fears people are facing and increase confidence in government entities. The alternative is that people could go without food assistance, housing support, child care assistance, and other services they desperately need.

In these uncertain times, our board appreciates the General Assembly's efforts to explore state-level policies that can offer added safety and a better sense of security for our neighbors. The Community Action Board stands ready to support legislation that will help some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

The Montgomery County Community Action Board strongly supports SB977 and asks for the Committee's favorable report.