

## **Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 977/HB 1431**

State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee

February 19, 2025

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

My name is Mara Levy and I am pleased to offer a favorable testimony in strong support of SB 977 /HB 1431- State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act).

I'm a proud resident of Silver Spring and have lived in Maryland most of my life. I'm an occupational therapist of 20 years and a small business owner. I am a member of Doctors for Camp Closure.

For years, I've been increasingly distressed about how our country treats immigrants. As a healthcare worker and moral human being, I believe we all have a moral obligation to care for each other. As a trauma therapist, I know how essential it is for people to feel safe in order to function in their day to day lives. Being able to trust our institutions is essential for healthy communities. However, our federal government is acting with what seems to be deliberate cruelty to make the lives of undocumented immigrants difficult and dangerous.

I'm now terrified by ways recent policy parallels the leadup to genocide at other points in history. With the opening of camps in Guantanamo, I'm reminded of the earliest iterations of the concentration camps in Nazi Germany. Our undocumented neighbors are at risk, and need protection.

We all depend on our personal data being kept safe from those who would use it to harm us. We need to be able to trust that our government will use that data for the common good, and won't allow it to be used to harm us without clear and specific cause.

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.

Without trust that our information is kept safe, my clients are afraid to register their children for health insurance. They're afraid to get the drivers license they need to drive safely. They're afraid to get the vaccinations that protect us all.

Maryland is now able to take steps to protect our immigrant neighbors. We can make it safer to receive necessary services and participate in public life. We can make it harder for our residents to be rounded up without specific cause. We have a chance to do the right thing.

I strongly urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 977/HB 1431.

Mara Levy MSOT, OTR/L, CLT-LANA, SEP