

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 828

SB 828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee

March 4, 2025

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

I am pleased to offer a **favorable testimony in strong support of SB 828- Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)**.

In addition to being a resident of Rockville for more than 26 years, I've been a volunteer with the Catholic Charities program at the [Montgomery County Family Justice Center](#) (MCFJC) for more than 15 years.¹ MCFJC co-locates multiple agencies in a safe and secure facility in Rockville to provide coordinated advocacy, government, civil legal services, and social services for survivors of domestic violence (DV) and their children. In the Catholic Charities office at MCFJC, we volunteers screen immigrant survivors of DV to determine whether they are eligible for relief under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and/or for a U visa, a special visa for immigrants who assist law enforcement in the detection, investigation and prosecution of violent crimes, including DV. I do this work because it builds peace in my community in at least two ways: First, if we can help a client escape an abusive relationship, that's a step towards healing them and their children—sometimes even saving their lives. Second, it's beneficial to the wider community. A 2021 [study](#) in the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Injury Epidemiology* found that more than two-thirds of mass shootings are DV incidents or are perpetrated by shooters with a history of DV. DV survivors are the proverbial canaries in the coal mine. Protect them and we protect ourselves.

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.

¹ Note that I am writing in my capacity as a volunteer and a Maryland voter, not on behalf of either MCFJC or Catholic Charities.

My fear as a volunteer is that our clients will become more afraid of ICE arrests at sensitive locations like the MCFJC than they are of the terrible abuse they and their children they suffer at home. It takes enormous courage for our clients to seek help under the best of circumstances. If we add the possibility of ICE arresting them on their way to or from the MCFJC, we create another obstacle to them breaking the cycle of violence for themselves and their children and put our own safety at risk.

Everyone should access essential services without fear of detention or separation. Public safety improves when immigrants feel safe reporting crimes and seeking help. Clear enforcement boundaries build trust, strengthening communities and institutions. For these reasons, **I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 828.**

Sincerely,

Carol Schlenker

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