



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony IN SUPPORT OF SB 828- Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

To: Senator Will Smith, Jr, Chair, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Jim Caldiero, Immigration Lead Advocate,
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Date: March 4, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony IN FAVOR of **SB 828**. I encourage the members of the Judiciary Committee to vote in favor of **the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act**.

We believe that everyone who lives in Maryland should be able to live a life without fear, regardless of race, creed, national origin, sexual orientation and immigration status. Today, that freedom from fear is under threat.

On January 20, 2025, the Trump administration rescinded federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS) policy that proscribed Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents from entering certain spaces that were deemed sensitive and safe, including schools, hospitals and churches. This long-standing policy was instituted in 2011¹.

Fear is pervasive among our immigrant communities. It manifests as the fear of taking a sick child to an emergency room, the fear of a pregnant woman going to hospital, the fear of sending your child to a school bus stop to get the education that would mean successful integration into a safe society, the fear of reporting to a judge because an ICE agent may be waiting or may be planning a raid on the very places we thought were safe – hospitals, schools, churches, courthouses. It is critical that these sensitive locations remain safe from immigration enforcement to ensure that all members of our communities have continued access to basic services without fear. For example, if an immigrant neighbor who contracts a communicable disease is afraid to visit a hospital, others in the community are placed at risk. The Trump administration's rescission of the sensitive locations policy threatens the security and safety of all in our communities.

By removing the protections of schools, hospitals, churches, social service facilities such as domestic violence centers which are fundamental to our civil society, the intended fear will pervade our immigrant communities and damage the safety and health and even the prosperity of all Marylanders as access to education, health and life-saving services are essentially cut off, placing entire communities at risk of public health crises. Fear of workplace raids will have a chilling effect on the Maryland economy as service and product delivery may be impaired.

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Requiring Attorney General Brown to issue guidance to clarify the highest level of protection for sensitive locations—schools, hospitals, courthouses, places where children gather—will provide centralized and consistent methods and procedures for all affected places in Maryland.

As recommended by the National Immigration Law Center, the guidance and practices that we must put in place must ensure that schools, hospitals, churches, courthouses and areas that are deemed private:

- Develop a written response policy and preparedness plans in advance.
- Designate an authorized person to review warrants and subpoenas.
- Understand the distinctions between public and private areas.
- Train non-authorized staff and volunteers on how to respond to ICE requests.
- Document all interactions with immigration enforcement.
- Connect with immigration response networks in your area.

I share my faith with more than 4000 Unitarian Universalists across Maryland, a faith that promotes and affirms the values of justice, equity and compassion in human relations, values that are embedded in our Declaration of Rights. We believe that no one, regardless of citizenship status, should be afraid to take a sick child to a hospital or visit a physician when her life may depend on it. We believe that no parent should be afraid to see their child off to the school that will offer that child the opportunity to learn and become a productive member of our society. Hanging on my wall are four Norman Rockwell paintings of President Franklin Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms." The painting of "Freedom From Fear" features parents standing over their child's bed as he sleeps safely. We believe that freedom from fear is the birthright of every person living in Maryland.

Please VOTE IN FAVOR of **SB 828**.

Thank you.

Jim Caldiero

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¹ <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/homan-defends-immigration-raids-at-middle-elementary-schools/ar-AA1xUduw?ocid=BingNewsSerp>

¹ 2021, MGA HB 23