



Council on American-Islamic Relations

CAIR Office in Maryland

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Chair William Smith, Jr.
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony Favorable for SB977 Maryland Data Privacy Act

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), I thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of Senate Bill 977 Maryland Data Privacy Act. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

This critical legislation ensures that Maryland's state and local agencies uphold the fundamental rights and privacy of all residents by restricting access to sensitive data and facilities for the purpose of enforcing federal immigration laws without proper judicial oversight.

Protecting Privacy and Civil Rights

CAIR Maryland and many groups have long documented the harmful effects of collaboration between local agencies and federal immigration enforcement. Immigrant communities continue to face unwarranted surveillance, discrimination, and harassment based on their immigration status, race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin. This bill is a necessary safeguard against the misuse of state and local resources to advance federal immigration enforcement policies that often disproportionately target marginalized communities.

Ensuring Trust in Public Institutions

When state and local agencies share sensitive data with federal immigration authorities without due process, it erodes trust between communities and the institutions meant to serve them. The fear of data misuse prevents immigrant residents from accessing essential services, reporting crimes, and engaging with law enforcement, making communities less safe. SB 977 restores public confidence by ensuring that no Maryland agency provides personal data, access to facilities, or facial recognition technology for immigration enforcement purposes without a valid court-issued warrant.

Accountability and Oversight

This bill rightfully establishes clear accountability measures. By requiring agencies to document requests for access to databases and facilities, it promotes transparency in government operations. Additionally, empowering the Attorney General to enforce compliance and issue civil penalties for violations ensures that this legislation has real, enforceable consequences for agencies that fail to uphold the law.

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Preventing Racial and Religious Profiling

For years, Muslim and Arab Americans have been disproportionately impacted by federal immigration enforcement programs that rely on broad and invasive data-sharing agreements. SB 977 directly addresses these concerns by preventing unwarranted cooperation between state and federal agencies, reducing the risk of racial, religious, and ethnic profiling.

For these reasons and more, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 977 to protect the rights and privacy of Maryland's residents, prevent the misuse of state and local resources, and uphold our state's commitment to justice and fairness. We stand ready to support this effort and work alongside legislators to ensure Maryland remains a place of safety and dignity for all including our diverse immigrant communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

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