

Testimony in SUPPORT of 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,

My name is Mara Levy and 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). 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'm also godmother to a little girl who was born to immigrant parents while living in my home.

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.

With the recent shifts in federal immigration policy, I'm terrified for my little girl and her parents. She's gone to the hospital a few times for various childhood ailments, as have her parents and brothers. Next time she's sick, her family will choose between getting her the care she needs and putting her at risk of losing her parents. She goes to preschool every day, and every day, her parents are afraid as they drop her off and pick her up from school. Her father was afraid to contest a traffic ticket since he'd have to be in the courthouse. Her parents have established themselves as contributing members of our community, and she's been growing and thriving. However, I'm now afraid every day that her parents will be taken away, and she'll be left alone.

As an occupational therapist who specializes in trauma, I'm well acquainted with the damage that is caused by chronic fear. Immunity is dampened, cognitive development is hampered, and her long term resiliency is threatened. I don't want this for my little girl, her parents, or the immigrant community.

I strongly urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB828 / HB1006.

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