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www.seiu32bj.org

**Testimony of Jaime Contreras, Executive Vice President 32BJ SEIU
In Support of SB 828
February 28, 2025**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Jaime Contreras and I am an Executive Vice President of 32BJ SEIU and Director of the Capital Area District. I am submitting testimony in support of Senate Bill 828, which would require the Attorney General to develop guidelines that limit immigration enforcement at sensitive locations in Maryland.

32BJ SEIU represents over 175,000 members up and down the East Coast, over 20,000 of whom are here in the Virginia, Washington D.C., and Maryland region. Our members are predominantly immigrants and people of color, and make up the backbone of the property service industry: they are the essential cleaners, security guards, airport workers, and other building service workers who keep our homes, workplaces, schools, and transportation hubs clean and safe. With our dedicated members, we fight to build communities where immigrants can live free of fear and are treated with fundamental dignity and respect.

On behalf of our union and members, I strongly urge the legislature to support SB 828, which would restrict Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) access to schools, hospitals, places of worship, crisis centers, social service establishments, recreational centers where children gather, courthouses, and other sensitive locations and gatherings. With the recent revocation of federal protections around sensitive locations, immigrants across the country now live in constant fear of being torn away from their families. This bill would ensure that immigrant workers can continue to contribute to our state and local economies and lead productive lives without fear that interaction with basic social institutions would tear their family apart.

It is unacceptable that in the state of Maryland a parent should fear taking their child to school because it presents a threat of detention and deportation. Our schools should be welcoming and safe environments that support the learning and growth of all children, not sites of terror and family separation. Without the protections outlined in this bill, immigrant communities may be forced to forego essential and potentially life-saving services, such as visits to the hospital, refuge in a domestic violence shelter, or meals at a food bank. Immigrant communities may also be less likely to come to law enforcement when they have witnessed or been victim to a crime fearing that any contact with government institutions may put them or their family members on a path to deportation. This makes both immigrant and non-immigrant communities less safe.

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Jaime Contreras
Capital Area District Director

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Immigrants are hardworking, taxpaying Marylanders who make our state and economy stronger. In 2022, undocumented immigrants paid \$96.7 billion in federal, state, and local taxes, or about \$8,889 per person.ⁱ Here in Maryland their tax dollars fund our schools, social service agencies, courts, and shelters, and they should be able to access these essential public services that they pay into free from fear or intimidation.

32BJ urges the legislature to stand with immigrants and working families against the needless cruelty that federal attacks are inflicting upon our communities. By passing SB 828, legislators can stand against family separations and instead invest in a stronger, safer Maryland for all. Thank you.

ⁱ <https://itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-taxes-2024/>

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