

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 977

State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee

February 19, 2025

SB: 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 977- State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act).**

I currently work as a primary care and hospital provider for many immigrant patients in Baltimore City. Issues that protect the personal data of my patients are core to my values as a physician and are crucial to the trust we build with some of our most vulnerable populations.

In recent years, the erosion of data privacy protections has led to increased fear and uncertainty within immigrant communities. The Maryland Data Privacy Act **SB 977** takes critical steps to restore trust by ensuring that state and local agencies, as well as law enforcement entities, are prohibited from sharing personal information, facial recognition data, and access to public facilities with federal immigration authorities unless a valid warrant is presented.

Using data to enforce immigration policies will be a public health danger for our community. It will reduce the frequency of visits to the Emergency Department for life-saving needs, putting the children I care for at risk. The rhetoric around this data sharing has already made a negative impact on my patients. Parents are afraid to visit their children in the hospital. Families constantly confide in me regarding the anxiety they have sending their children to school or navigating their daily lives. Sharing personal data **WILL** harm our relationship with the community and put my patient's lives at risk.

I stand with immigrant communities and supports the Maryland Data Privacy Act because it will:

1. **Limit Access to Databases and Facilities:** Law enforcement agencies and state or local government units must deny access to sensitive data and facilities to individuals seeking to enforce federal immigration law without a valid court-issued warrant.
2. **Protect Personal Information:** The Act prohibits the disclosure of personal data, photographs, and biometric information, such as facial recognition scans, to federal immigration authorities unless due legal processes are followed.

3. **Provide Accountability and Transparency:** Agencies must maintain records of all access requests and submit annual reports to the Attorney General and the General Assembly to ensure compliance and transparency.
4. **Ensure Enforcement and Penalties:** The Attorney General is empowered to enforce these protections, with civil penalties for violations and disciplinary actions for state employees who fail to comply.

This legislation is crucial not only for protecting the privacy of all Maryland residents but also for fostering trust between immigrant communities and public institutions. By clearly delineating the boundaries of federal immigration enforcement within our state, we promote the values of dignity, safety, and fairness.

In 2021, this legislature took action to protect immigrants and safeguard their sensitive data. I, once again, call on this legislature to act.¹

I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 977

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¹[2021. MGA HB23](#)