



Testimony in SUPPORT of
Senate Bill 828: Immigration Enforcement – Sensitive Locations – Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee

Position: Support

March 3, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

Strong Schools Maryland is pleased to offer **a favorable testimony in strong support of SB 828 – Immigration Enforcement – Sensitive Locations – Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act).**

At Strong Schools Maryland, we work to support the faithful implementation of the promises legislated through the landmark Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. The Blueprint envisions a public schools system where all students can feel safe and supported to learn and thrive in the school community. The students and families who have been promised this education and safe space include immigrant and undocumented communities. School is one of the few social supports that is protected for all communities and the current enforcement of immigration policies in originally protected/sensitive locations deeply negatively impacts students, families, and the overall schools community. **For these reasons, we urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 828, which would, if enacted, codify all preschools, primary and secondary schools, vocational and trade schools, and colleges or universities as “sensitive locations”** to protect students and families from invasive and harmful immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activities.

For over a decade, federal policy limited 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.

A lack of protections for immigrant communities from ICE activities deeply harms both students and the overall school community.

Strict Immigration enforcement and the presence of ICE activities in and around schools deeply undermines the safety, stability, and well being of students and the broader school community. When there is increased ICE activity around schools, there are documented declines in school attendance as families, fearing separation, withdraw their children. Moving reactively due to systemic marginalization disrupts student education and often leads to significant negative impacts to academic outcomes.¹ Beyond academic threats, the pervasive threat of ICE enforcement and activity in schools contributes to toxic stress in children which impacts brain development, and increases risk of depression, anxiety, PTSD, and severe psychological distress.² The burden of these negative impacts overwhelmingly fall on Black and Brown children in our public schools. Further, this enforcement promotes disengagement from essential social supports, limiting critical resources for families and weakening community trust.³ The effect of ICE enforcement in and around schools contradicts the mission of our public school system in Maryland and erodes the foundational promises made to our students.

Strong Schools Maryland stands with immigrant communities and supports the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act because it will:

1. **Protect Access to Essential Services:** No one should have to choose between life-saving medical care and the risk of family separation. Children deserve to attend school without fear, and individuals must be able to seek justice in our courts without the threat of detention.
2. **Enhance Public Safety:** When immigrants feel safe accessing services and reporting crimes, our entire community benefits. Fear of enforcement discourages individuals from cooperating with law enforcement, which in turn hampers public safety efforts.
3. **Strengthen Community Trust:** By establishing clear boundaries for immigration enforcement, we foster trust between immigrant communities and the institutions meant to serve them. This trust is essential for maintaining a healthy, vibrant, and cohesive society.

Commitment to supporting and protecting immigrant student groups who are predominantly Black and Brown and English Language Learners is interwoven into every pillar of the Blueprint. Early childhood education is available and accessible for *all* families, taking into account language, fiscal, and cultural needs. Community schools provide community services and support for *all* students in the school community. The law mandates equitable funding to address the needs of historically and systemically marginalized students in order to provide services such as English language learner resources and support. The Blueprint is built on the very foundation of active community engagement and accountability to governing systems to ensure that *all* students are equitably served, including and prioritizing supports and protections for immigrant and undocumented students. Without preserving the protections for immigrant communities in our schools, the promises of the Blueprint will never be realized and real students and families will be harmed in the process.

Everyone should access essential services without fear of detention or separation. Public safety improves when immigrants feel safe reporting crimes and seeking help. Clear enforcement boundaries build trust, strengthening communities and institutions.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 828.

Please contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org for additional questions.

¹ [How Strict Immigration Enforcement Harms School Children](#)

² [American Immigration Council](#)

³ [Immigration Enforcement and US Schools: What Could Happen and What Education Leaders Can Do](#)