

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 828/HB 1006
SB 828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and
Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

Judicial Proceedings Committee

February 28, 2025

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee,

The Washington Spencerville Spanish Church of Seventh-day Adventist is pleased to offer a favorable testimony in strong support of SB 828/HB 1006 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act).

The Seventh Day Adventist Church is a worldwide Christian organization. One of our 28 fundamental beliefs as a church is Unity In the Body of Christ. We believe that we are all to be united; race, culture, and nationality distinctions must NOT be divisive. As a church with a majority of Latino/Hispanic members we are against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) coming into places that our community feels safe and welcome in. That being places of worship, schools, and healthcare facilities.

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.

The Washington Spencerville Spanish Church supports our Latino community and we will advocate for their rights. Our communities are greatly affected when they live in fear, and that is something we must always protect. Our mission as a community of faith is always to help, love, and care for those around us. We see the impact we make in our community when we are united. Bringing legal status into sensitive locations is a path for segregation, which is something we are completely against.

In this last month, we have seen how immigrants live in fear, and because of this, they isolate themselves. Our church is suffering greatly because of this new policy. Our members live in fear that Immigration and Customs Enforcement will come and take them away. The mothers and fathers at our church make plans if, in any case, they get taken away from their children. Our church lives in fear that at every service, ICE will barge in and create

unwanted chaos. Our most faithful members look behind their backs, waiting for something to happen; even the children live in fear. The most difficult challenges our church faces are due to the fear our congregation is living through. Which again is something we don't want. We plead that something is done so our community feels safe and loved like before. As a church, we believe that going to places of worship, schools, and healthcare facilities is a right. In no way should ICE ever be in the places where people are supposed to feel safe. Legal status should not be the reason why we treat another person differently and, in many cases, inhumane. It should be the reason to help someone in need and offer assurance that everything will be okay. Let's make a difference and help these communities. They need us now more than ever.

The Washington Spencerville Spanish Church 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.

The Washington Spencerville Spanish Church of Seventh-day Adventist urges the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 828/HB 1006.

