

Maryland Should Ensure that Immigrants' Data is Secure and Privacy is Guaranteed

Position Statement Supporting Senate Bill 977

Given before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Like all Marylanders, immigrants should feel confident in the privacy and security of the data they share with state and local agencies. They must be assured that unless there is a valid court-issued warrant, their data cannot be shared by law enforcement agencies or state and local government for the purposes of immigration enforcement. **The Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports SB 977 because it will ensure that immigrants data, like that of all Marylanders, is secured and help guarantee their privacy.**

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.

The Maryland Center on Economic Policy 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.

Further, a;; Marylanders benefit from state policies that make our state a welcoming place for immigrants. Just over 1 million immigrants reside in Maryland, working sectors across our state's economy. About 36 percent of Main Street business owners in Maryland are immigrants, operating storefront shops that help keep downtown areas vibrant. About 21 percent of Maryland's workers are immigrants including 33 percent of child care workers, 29 percent of registered nurses and 27 percent of software developers.

Immigrant workers and business owners generate \$85 billion of economic output in Maryland. In fact, when immigrants move to Maryland the economy grows and this doesn't mean fewer jobs, it means more jobs, more consumers, more workers and more business owners.

In 2021, this legislature took action to protect immigrants and safeguard their sensitive data. **The Maryland Center on Economic Policy**, once again calls on the General Assembly to act to protect the private data of all Marylanders.

The Maryland Center on Economic Policy urges **the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 977**.