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TESTIMONY ON SB0977/HB1431 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Laura Atwood. I am a resident of District 20, and I am submitting this testimony in support of SB0977/HB1431, the Maryland Data Privacy Act.

At the federal level, these are serious times. I hope that we have all studied history and contemporary society enough to recognize the scapegoating of entire communities—and that we also recognize the almost unthinkable cruelty that individuals and governments are capable of.

Maryland needs to join other states, with full courage and resoluteness, in truly supporting its residents by resisting the federal government's immigration devastation. This includes supporting the Data Privacy Act, which would limit federal access to state and local databases that contain sensitive personal information.

I support this and other immigration bills because of my belief in the deep inherent worth of every individual, and in the inherent interconnectedness of all of us. More specifically, I am a physical therapist, a parent of young adult children, and a community member who has lived internationally and has long been involved with people who've immigrated to this country under a variety of circumstances. People who have immigrated enrich my personal life (I've been married to one for 28 years!), my workplace and social circles, and my local community.

Every individual who is detained and/or deported is a human being with dignity, deserving of compassion and of justice under constitutional, international, and moral law. And every individual who is detained and/or deported is part of a larger community—often including children and vulnerable adults.

How many of you have children, or (!) have been children? What is the lifelong impact of losing a parent at a young age, or at any age?

Recently while my mind was spinning with immigration-related news, I stopped off at my local pupusería because I'd heard that many local restaurants are struggling, plus their pupusas are delicious. A few families were there just enjoying life, as things should be. The father of one clearly tired toddler was trying to leave the table to go to the bathroom. The kid was crying, not wanting the father to go; he scooped her up and hugged and danced with her, turned the now-calm kid over to the mother, and left for the bathroom. All an everyday event. But my spinning mind went to the thought: What if in a different situation, his kid was crying and he was unable to return?

How much lifelong trauma are we as a society inflicting—by letting ICE create so much loss, and also realistic fear of this loss?? And how could we not do everything in our power to prevent this?

The Data Privacy Act would make it harder for ICE and other federal agencies to find and misuse personal data to carry out a destructive and hateful agenda. **I therefore respectfully urge this committee to return a (favorable/favorable with amendments/unfavorable) report on SB0977/HB143.** Thank you.