



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 828

SB 828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies
(Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee
February 19, 2025

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

La Clinica del Pueblo is pleased to offer **favorable testimony in strong support of SB 828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)**

La Clinica is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) providing comprehensive culturally competent health and community services focusing on improving health outcomes for medically underserved populations. While our services began in the District of Columbia in 1983, our patient population is now mostly made up of Prince George's County, residents, where we operate a primary care clinic and three school-based mental health programs.

As a grantee of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), La Clinica is required to comply with federally mandated guidelines that ensure our facilities are accessible and services remain continuous. However, as of January 20, 2025, a federal policy has been enacted that lifts restrictions on Immigration Customs Enforcement officials' entry into sensitive locations, such as schools, hospitals, and places of worship. This change has made members of our community feel vulnerable in spaces where they should feel safe.

The recent changes have fostered an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among our patients and students. At our clinical facility in Prince George's County, we have noticed that the fear of Immigration and Customs Enforcement actions is deterring patients from attending their appointments and receiving necessary care.

In the schools we serve, students are increasingly anxious about being in public spaces. Many are afraid to go to school, while parents worry about sending them to school. Most of our students have already heard of friends or acquaintances detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement in familiar places like the metro or shopping malls, heightening their fear that they or their parents could be next. As a consequence, our ability to serve our patients and clients has been negatively impacted. We know that our communities' well-being, public health, and overall safety are at serious risk.

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La Clínica del Pueblo supports state-led legislation that safeguards access to essential services for local communities and families, regardless of immigration status. This includes access to healthcare, education, and critical resources without fear or intimidation. As such, La Clínica supports the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act because it will provide essential guidelines that:

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 all Maryland residents feel safe accessing services and reporting crimes, our entire community benefits. Fears 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.

La Clinica del Pueblo **urges the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 828.**

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