



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony to Support - SB 977- State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act).

To: Senator William Smith, Chair, and
Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Jim Caldiero, Lead Advocate, Immigration,
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Date: February 19, 2025

Dear Senator Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony IN SUPPORT OF **SB 977- State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)**.

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 /HB 1431 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 Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland stands with immigrant communities and 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.

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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 information sharing with federal immigration enforcement, we promote our values of dignity, safety, and fairness.

In 2021, this legislature took action to protect immigrants and safeguard their sensitive data. The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland once again calls on this legislature to act.¹

My faith, which I share with more than 4000 Unitarian Universalists across the state, calls me to promote and affirm justice, equity and compassion in human relations, a value that is inherent in protecting the right of privacy and to be secure from unwarranted intrusions and searches as stated in Article 46 of the Maryland Declaration of Rights.

I encourage the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 977/HB 1431.

Thank you.

¹ 2021, MGA HB 23