

Maureen Wambui

7827 Rolling View Ave, Nottingham, MD, 21236

Maureen.w.m.2030@gmail.com

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Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Maryland General Assembly, Annapolis, MD 21401

**Testimony in Support with amendments of HB1222 – Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)**

Hearing Date: March 27th, 2025

Chairperson and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

My name is Maureen Wambui, and I am a community advocate and resident of Legislative District 8 in Maryland. I am writing in **strong support of HB1222 but with some amendments**, I have seen firsthand the challenges that immigrants in Maryland face when local and state authorities entangle themselves in federal immigration enforcement. HB1222 is a significant step toward fostering trust between immigrant communities and law enforcement. However, I urge the committee to consider strengthening the bill with key amendments to ensure it fully protects Maryland's diverse residents.

HB1222 rightly seeks to establish clear boundaries between local/state authorities and federal immigration enforcement. It ensures that law enforcement agencies in Maryland do not ask about immigration status and prevents state resources from being used to enforce federal immigration laws. These provisions are essential for ensuring that all Maryland residents feel safe reporting crimes, seeking assistance, and fully participating in their communities without fear of deportation.

**Recommended Amendments**

While the bill takes crucial steps in the right direction, I strongly recommend the following amendments:

**1. End the 287(g) Program in Maryland Entirely**

- The bill currently calls for the termination of existing agreements between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities by July 1, 2025. However, it should go further and permanently prohibit future 287(g) agreements in Maryland. These

agreements have disproportionately led to racial profiling, wrongful detentions, and the erosion of trust between immigrant communities and local police.

- Studies have shown that 287(g) agreements do not significantly improve public safety; rather, they divert local law enforcement resources away from addressing serious crimes.

## **2. Ensure No Prolonged Detention for Civil Immigration Holds**

- The bill must explicitly state that no individual should be held beyond their release date for civil immigration purposes. Immigration detainers, which are merely administrative requests, have been ruled unconstitutional when they result in prolonged detention without a judicial warrant.
- Enforcing this measure would prevent unnecessary detentions and avoid costly legal battles for Maryland jurisdictions.

## **3. Expand Protections for Victims and Witnesses of Crimes**

- Many immigrants fear engaging with law enforcement due to the possibility of being questioned about their immigration status. The bill should include specific provisions ensuring that victims and witnesses of crimes will not be subject to inquiries or referrals to federal immigration authorities.
- This measure would encourage crime reporting and enhance public safety for all Maryland residents.

HB1222 is a critical step toward ensuring that Maryland remains a state where all residents can live with dignity and security, regardless of their immigration status. However, for it to achieve its full intent, it is essential to end the harmful 287(g) program permanently, prohibit prolonged immigration-related detention, and strengthen protections for victims and witnesses of crimes.

I urge this committee to support HB1222 with these amendments to create a more inclusive, fair, and safe Maryland for all.

As part of Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, along with CASA, we support a clean bill that removes the amendments added to the bill in the Judiciary Committee that require notification and transfer to ICE. The sole purpose of this legislation is to end 287(g) agreements in Maryland, not to create or mandate new forms of collaboration with ICE. We strongly support a clean bill that aligns with the original intentions of the legislation – to simply terminate 287(g) agreements in Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maureen Wambui