

Letter of Support**Senate Bill 828 – Immigration Enforcement – Sensitive Locations – Guidelines and Policies
(Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)**
*Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 4, 2025*

As a part of our State of the Economy series of reports that analyze different aspects of Maryland's economy, last year we published a report that took a look at the role immigration has on our state's economy. It looked at how internationally-born Marylanders contribute to our economy, both as labor force participants and as an important source of spending.¹ Based on these findings, one thing is overwhelmingly clear: **Maryland cannot afford to lose its immigrant community.**

In a time when Maryland's overall civilian labor force has struggled, surges in immigrant labor force participation have helped to keep our economy afloat. Immigrants represent 17% of our population, but more than 21% of our civilian labor force, putting us well ahead of the national average and higher than any of our neighbors. In fact, between 2016 and 2022, nearly all of the growth to Maryland's civilian labor force came from internationally-born Marylanders.

The benefits of a strong immigrant community can be felt across every industry and in every corner of our state. Without these communities, almost every crab processor in Maryland would need to shut down, according to a 2020 survey.² Our already-overtaxed healthcare workforce would falter without the immigrants that make up a vital share of healthcare workers, including more than 24% of registered nurses and more than 55% of home healthcare aides.³ Similar impact would be felt in everything from the hospitality industry to STEM.

In addition to buoying our labor force, immigrants make significant contributions to our state's revenue and hold a tremendous amount of spending power. In 2022, immigrants in Maryland paid **\$5.3 billion** in state and local taxes, and contributed more than \$6 billion to Social Security and Medicare. Furthermore, they represented almost **\$37 billion** in total spending power.⁴

Of course, it is no accident that immigrants contribute so much to Maryland. We have worked hard to make our state a safe and welcoming home for international communities, and those efforts have seen great success. According to a 2022 study, two of the top five most welcoming

¹ Comptroller of Maryland. (2024 April). "State of the Economy Series: Immigration and the Economy." <https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/reports/static-files/research/immigration-economy.pdf>

² Maryland Department of Agriculture and Chesapeake Bay Seafood Industry Association. (2020 March). "Impacts of the H-2B Visa Program for Seasonal Workers on Maryland's Seafood Industry and Economy." <https://mda.maryland.gov/documents/2020-H2B-Impact-Study.pdf>

³ Migration Policy Institute. (2023 April). "Immigrant Health-Care Workers in the United States." <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigrant-health-care-workers-united-states-2021>

⁴ American Immigration Council. "Immigrants in Maryland." <https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/maryland/#>



metropolitan areas for immigrants are in Maryland, with the Baltimore metropolitan area receiving the second-highest score in the nation.⁵ Keeping our immigrant communities safe and providing more pathways for immigrants to become lawful residents is vital to our labor workforce and our overall economy.

What this bill does: SB828, the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act, helps protect our international communities in the spaces where they are most vulnerable. The Act designates schools, playgrounds, hospitals, places of worship, and other areas as sensitive locations, and empowers the Attorney General to develop guidelines to limit immigration enforcement at these locations to the fullest extent possible within state and federal law.

Why this bill is important: Immigration enforcement actions have broad repercussions that go well beyond our undocumented residents. If our international community cannot feel safe in the places where they worship, where they learn, or where their children play, many will choose to leave Maryland entirely. Such an exodus will have devastating effects on Maryland's economy. As we face down historic budget deficits, it is incredibly important that we build up and protect our immigrant communities. We simply cannot afford to do otherwise. Therefore, **I urge a favorable report on SB828**, and I applaud Chair Smith for his strong support of our international community.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Matthew Dudzic, Director of State Affairs, at MDudzic@marylandtaxes.gov.



Brooke E. Lierman
Comptroller of Maryland

⁵ The George W. Bush Institute – SMU Economic Growth Initiative. (2022 December). *“Immigrants and Opportunity in America’s Cities.”* <https://gwushcenter.imgix.net/wp-content/uploads/Immigrants-and-Opp-3.pdf>