

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 977/HB 1431

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

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee OR House Judiciary Committee

February 19, 2025

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

HB: Dear Honorable Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Committee,

Pam Stuckey, RN, BSN is pleased to offer a favorable testimony in strong support of SB 977 / HB 1431- State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)

I am a retired nurse who has also been involved in supporting immigrants and their communities for many years. As someone very familiar with the health care system and more importantly familiar with communicating with patients and ... more importantly knowing before I ever even entered Nursing School but certainly ascribed to after becoming a nurse ... the safety and security of every patient is THE priority AND their health is dependent on the degree of emotional security and respect they feel and experience within the health care system. Immigrants, regardless of their status, deserve the same safety and security as every, regardless of their status. I know as a nurse that my success as a nurse was dependent on the degree of trust each patient had in what I said and did. And I know if immigrants feel that they will put themselves at risk by reaching out to the health care system they will then put their health at greater risk.

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.

I do not want to see people who are already stressed and vulnerable experience more fear. This is contrary to my ethics as a nurse and to the values of the health care system.

I stand with immigrant communities and supports the Maryland Data Privacy Act because it will:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 federal immigration enforcement within our state, we promote the values of dignity, safety, and fairness.

In 2021, this legislature took action to protect immigrants and safeguard their sensitive data. ORG, once again calls on this legislature to act.

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

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