

Please make a COPY



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 977

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

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee

February 19, 2025

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

Do The Most Good is pleased to offer a favorable testimony in strong support of **SB 977 - State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)**.

Do the Most Good is a grassroots organization based in Montgomery County, MD with members across Montgomery County. My name is Gwen Stewart and I have been an active member on the **DTMG** steering committee since 2017. We partner with organizations in political action and civic engagement to further inclusive, progressive values and act with respect and kindness as an all-embracing community, while standing up to hatred and bigotry in every form. We act locally to make our community a more inclusive, safer place and support others dedicated to these goals.

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** 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. We have moved beyond the *Fugitive Slave Law of 1850* and we must not return to such monstrous times. This bill protects our community from racism and discrimination. **Do The Most Good** values a community that embraces all its residents. A culture of distrust has a negative impact on all residents and must not be allowed to be promoted.

Do The Most Good stands with immigrant communities and supports the Maryland Data Privacy Act because it will:

Please make a COPY

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.

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. **Do The Most Good** once again calls on this legislature to act.¹

Do The Most Good urges the committee to provide a favorable report on **SB 977**