



Testimony of CANDLE
Regarding Senate Bill 977, the Maryland Data Privacy Act
Submitted by Birgit Sharp, February 17, 2025
Favorable

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of CANDLE, the Community Action Network for Democracy, Liberties and Equality based in Anne Arundel and Calvert counties. Our organization supports Senate Bill 977, the Maryland Data Privacy Act.

Enacting this bill will further safeguard the privacy of personal data collected and managed by state and local governments and their affiliates. While this proposed legislation will protect the rights and well-being of all members of our community, it is urgently needed to protect vulnerable immigrant populations from the potential overreach of federal immigration enforcement into local affairs.

- **Protects Sensitive Information:** By restricting the access of federal immigration enforcement to local databases and facilities without a warrant and clearly identifying the record to be accessed, this bill safeguards sensitive personal information of individuals served by state and local programs. It reinforces the principle that using essential services should not expose individuals to immigration enforcement.
- **Upholds Due Process:** The bill rightly requires a valid warrant issued by a court before access to databases or facilities is granted for immigration enforcement purposes. This bill prevents random searches through private data by requiring that the federal immigration enforcement party clearly identify the record to be accessed. This upholds the fundamental principle of due process and ensures that any such actions are based on legal authority.
- **Promotes Transparency and Accountability:** The reporting requirements outlined in the bill, including tracking requests for information and reporting on compliance, will provide transparency and accountability. This data will allow the public and policymakers to understand the scope of federal immigration data search activities within our state and assess the impact on our communities.
- **Civil Penalties:** This bill also includes civil penalties. Our group appreciates the addition of these penalties with the hopes that these penalties will help deter violations.

Our community action group believes that SB 977 is a step towards protecting the privacy rights of all Marylanders so that services can be provided to residents without fear of causing more harm than good. We urge the committee to give this bill a favorable recommendation. Thank you.

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Far better to light the candle, than to curse the darkness.