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Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 828

SB 828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee

March 4, 2025

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

I am pleased to offer a **favorable testimony in strong support of SB 828- Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act).**

I am a retired teacher, retired from the Howard County Public School System. During my years in the system, I taught many immigrant children. I have seen their hesitancy in approaching official channels, particularly hospitals and police stations. I've heard many cases of crimes unreported because of this fear. I had two girls afraid of reporting an attack, tell me that if they went to the police their families would be deported. Now Those criminals are now free to attack other women. I had a student who wound up in the hospital after trying to commit suicide. His father's reaction was fear and anger, fear for his son, anger that the hospital would report them and they'd be deported. These are only two of many stories I could tell. Even with the laws we passed in Howard County, the new administration's aggressive attempts at deportation and threats to so-called sanctuary cities have increased fear among our immigrant community, making them increasingly hesitant to attend school, use public services, report crimes, get medical care, or even go to church!

For over a decade, federal policy limited Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activities in sensitive locations—such as hospitals, schools, courthouses, and places of worship—to prevent intimidation and ensure access to essential services. However, as of January 20, 2025, the revocation of these protections has left immigrant communities vulnerable to enforcement actions in spaces where they should feel safe.

This shift has already created an environment of fear and uncertainty, discouraging individuals from seeking medical care, pursuing education, accessing legal resources, or engaging with law enforcement. As a result, our communities, public health, and overall safety are at risk.

Many of my former students are no citizens, but they are hearing stories of wide sweeps by I.C.E. and are increasingly fearful of getting caught up in a raid or having someone else in their family sent to a deportation center. Venezuelans, many in families originally on TPS are hearing ghastly stories about Guantanamo! None of this is what I or you should want our neighbors to be experiencing, They are our state residents, workers, and taxpayers, Our state should assure they are treated with dignity when they use the services they need.

Everyone should access essential services without fear of detention or separation. Public safety improves when immigrants feel safe reporting crimes and seeking help. Clear enforcement boundaries build trust, strengthening communities and institutions. For these reasons, I/ORGANIZATION **urges the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 828.**