

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 0828

SB 0828- Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies

(Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)  
Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 4, 2025

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am a family doctor living in D 15 and I offer a favorable testimony in strong support of SB 0828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act).

I am a member of Doctors for Camp Closure, Maryland. I am Jewish and I take very seriously the Biblical commandment of welcoming the stranger. As a doctor I know without a shadow of a doubt that there is no healthy amount of time for a person to spend in an ICE jail. The medical and psychological conditions in ICE jails are deplorable. Even more heartbreaking, we know that putting a family member in an ICE jail results in family separation. Children suffer over the loss of a parent and the entire family suffers both emotionally and financially when they lose a wage earner and a loved one. Children lose their ability to concentrate in school. They can no longer thrive.

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.

Without protection of sensitive locations, such as hospitals and medical clinics, our patients will not feel safe seeking medical care. This not only has a negative impact upon the individual patient but also has a damaging effect on their families and communities. If patients with chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure are too afraid to seek medical care, they face a high risk of disability and preventable deaths. That results in suffering for them and their entire family. We know all too well from epidemics of infectious diseases such as Covid and tuberculosis that if an individual is afraid to seek care, entire communities are then at risk.

As health care workers we work each and every day to have a trusting relationship with our patients. All of that hard work will instantly be destroyed if our patients are at risk of deportation just because they were accessing the health care settings which we had encouraged them to visit.

As a family doctor I stand with immigrant communities and supports the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act because it will:

Protect Access to Essential Services: No one should have to choose between life-saving medical care and the risk of family separation. Children deserve to attend school without fear, and individuals must be able to seek justice in our courts without the threat of detention.

Enhance Public Safety: When immigrants feel safe accessing services and reporting crimes, our entire community benefits. Fear of enforcement discourages individuals from cooperating with law enforcement, which in turn hampers public safety efforts.

Strengthen Community Trust: By establishing clear boundaries for immigration enforcement, we foster trust between immigrant communities and the institutions meant to serve them. This trust is essential for maintaining a healthy, vibrant, and cohesive society.

I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 0828

Kate Sugarman, MD

Potomac MD 20854