

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 977

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

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee

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

I am pleased to offer 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).

In recent years, the erosion of data privacy protections has led to increased fear and uncertainty within immigrant communities and beyond. So many of us have been hacked or had our data used for illegitimate purposes that it makes us wary whenever we fill out forms for medical services, to sign up for programs, or register complaints. How much more is it a fearful situation for immigrants documented or undocumented to fill out medical forms for required vaccinations, to sign-up for food programs, or make a complaint when they are being victimized or trying to access services to which they are entitled. 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.

As a person who values due process, I am very concerned when we give up protections that keep us safe because it is expedient or quicker. They are one of the things that makes our country different from others.

I stand with immigrant communities and support the Maryland Data Privacy Act because it will require law enforcement agencies and state and local government officials to deny access to sensitive data to federal immigration officers without a valid court-issued warrant. It also requires agencies to maintain records of all access requests and submit annual reports to the Attorney General and the General Assembly to ensure compliance and transparency. Finally, it provides civil penalties for violations and disciplinary actions for state employees who violate the law.

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.

I strongly support SB977 and urge the committee to provide a favorable report on it to move it forward.

