

Date of Hearing: February 19, 2025

Jo Shifrin

Bethesda, MD 20817

**TESTIMONY ON SB 977 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**

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

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

**FROM:** Jo Shifrin

**OPENING: My name is Jo Shifrin. I am a resident of District 16. I am submitting this 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).**

My family came from Russia, Ukraine, and Poland about 100 years ago. As Jews, they suffered from all forms of oppression and discrimination. One reason they were happy coming to the U.S. is that we have a Constitution that protects all of our residents.

In recent years, the erosion of data privacy protections has led to increased fear and uncertainty within the immigrant community. This has led to an erosion of trust in all levels of government, Federal, State and local. With the recent election of Donald Trump, and threats of mass deportation, immigrants are worried that their personal data could be used by ICE to identify them and put them in harm's way.

Although the 4th Amendment to the Constitution protects people who reside in the US from illegal search and seizure, and the courts –including the Supreme Court– have held that access to private data (including electronic data) is prohibited without a warrant, immigrants have a right to be fearful. In the first 3 weeks of the Trump Administration, the executive branch of the Federal government has repeatedly overstepped its powers.

SB 977 will stop ICE from accessing state databases, records, or information without a valid warrant. It will also require that state agencies document all ICE access requests and report this to the State's Attorney General and the General Assembly. These steps will ensure that state data is not misused, and that there is transparency and accountability in compliance with law.

It is my hope that passage of this bill will protect Marylanders' privacy by shielding sensitive data from unwarranted federal surveillance and misuse, and build trust between immigrant communities and the agencies that serve them. **I respectfully urge the Committee to return a favorable report on SB 977.**