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SB 828: Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Position: **Favorable**

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

The Public Justice Center strongly supports SB 828, the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act, and urges you to issue a favorable report.

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization which seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. The PJC provides advice and representation to low-income clients, advocates before legislatures and government agencies, and collaborates with community and advocacy organizations; we actively incorporate anti-racism and racial equity goals into our advocacy work. Our organization frequently represents and partners with immigrants and immigrant communities impacted by this legislation. For example, we often represent tenants who are immigrants in eviction cases and cases seeking to hold their landlord accountable for dangerous conditions of disrepair, and we advance equitable access to school by representing students and families. We also represent workers whose employers are paying less than minimum wage, denying overtime benefits, or unfairly classifying them as contractors.

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.

ICE enforcement at sensitive locations would compromise the safety, disrupt services, and create fear among our immigrant-clients. For example, our Housing team frequently represents tenants who must come to courthouses in eviction cases and in cases seeking to hold their landlord accountable for dangerous housing conditions and predatory practices. Landlords of our

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immigrant clients already often threaten to call ICE on our clients if they defend against the landlord's wrongful eviction case or seek to hold the landlord accountable for dangerous housing defects. If we cannot assure our immigrant clients that the courthouse is a sensitive location in which ICE is very unlikely to be present, our immigrant clients will be much less likely to attend court to defend against the wrongful eviction case or to hold the landlord accountable for dangerous conditions of disrepair. When our immigrant clients do not hold their landlords accountable in court for fear of ICE enforcement, the community loses too. When renters do not defend court cases and are subsequently evicted, the state pays more. [Preventing eviction saves the state money by reducing homelessness and state-funded safety net costs](#) related to shelter, educating students experiencing homelessness, health care, foster care, decreased incarceration, and the economic impacts of increased employment and income stability. Additionally, when renter-immigrants are terrified of coming to court because of the potential for ICE enforcement at the courthouse, they are unable to hold their landlord accountable for dangerous conditions—which means that the whole neighborhood suffers from the blight and decay perpetuated by negligent property owners.

SB 828 also provides important protections for clients of the PJC's Education Stability Project, which advances equity in public education by combatting discipline practices that disproportionately push Black and brown children, and children with disabilities, out of school. The threat and fear of immigration enforcement also impedes equitable access to school and infringes upon the right of all Maryland children to receive a public education regardless of immigration status. SB 828 is necessary to protect that right. In new [guidance on immigration enforcement actions at Maryland schools issued in 2025](#), the Maryland State Department of Education noted that various existing laws protect the confidentiality of student records and advised local school officials to cooperate with law enforcement and federal immigration authorities "in accordance with their school district policies and guidelines and in consultation with their attorneys." This guidance is insufficient to protect students and assuage their credible fears, particularly given the current climate in Maryland schools. For instance, in a [February 2025 social media post tagging ICE](#), an Overlea High School teacher stated: "If you want the names to investigate families to find illegals, let me know in dm [direct message]," . . . "I'll give names and school. All in Md." SB 828's clear mandate of a valid warrant issued by a federal or state court, and penalties for violations, is vital to ensuring student privacy and protecting the right of all children to attend school in Maryland.

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, **Public Justice Center urges the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 828.**