



February 19, 2025

The Honorable William Smith, Chairman  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Smith and other distinguished members of the Committee,

My name is Shari Rendall and I am the Director of State and Local Engagement at the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). FAIR is a non-profit, non-partisan organization of concerned individuals who believe that our immigration laws must be reformed to serve our nation's interests.

FAIR advocates for immigration policies that reduce the harmful impact of illegal immigration on national security, public safety, the economy, jobs, education, healthcare and the environment.

Founded in 1979, FAIR has more than three million members and supporters nationwide including approximately 12,300 in Maryland. On behalf of our members and supporters, I am writing to express FAIR's strong opposition to Senate Bill (SB) 977. FAIR opposes the reckless lawlessness of sanctuary policies like those imposed by this bill.

Sanctuary policies place a greater emphasis on the welfare of illegal aliens than the well-being and safety of citizens and legal immigrants in their own communities by impeding the enforcement of federal immigration laws and blocking free communication between state and local officials and federal immigration officials.

SB 977 expresses that state and local officials should have no involvement in immigration enforcement without a judicial warrant. In practical terms, this bill not only forbids law enforcement officers from cooperating with federal agents in enforcing immigration laws, but more importantly, prevents them from alerting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) if they become aware of the fact that a suspected criminal in custody at the local jail might also be in this country illegally and thus removable by law. Instead of handing these convicted

criminals over to ICE for removal, they will be released back onto Maryland streets, many to recommit more crimes.

Further, SB 977 conflicts with federal law. Specifically, 8 U.S.C. §1357 (g) states that law enforcement officers may enter into memorandums of understanding with ICE but also that a formal agreement with the federal government is *not* necessary for any officer or employee of a state or local agency to communicate with the Attorney General regarding the immigration status of any individual, including reporting knowledge that a particular alien is not lawfully present in the United States or to cooperate with the Attorney General in the identification, apprehension, *detention*, or removal of aliens not lawfully present in the United States.

In its 2022 End-of-Year report (the most recent one available), the Department of Homeland Security highlighted the effectiveness of the state and federal partnerships. State and local law enforcement 287(g) officers encountered 8,842 aliens from 141 countries. Of those encountered, 1,895 were convicted criminals and 4,999 had pending criminal charges. Among the charges and convictions were 1,594 for assault, 1,189 for dangerous drugs, 74 for homicides, and 430 for larceny. Only 160 had criminal charges or convictions for immigration.

The 287(g) program merely adds a tool to the crime fighting belt of law enforcement offices by detaining criminals and preventing them from revictimizing others in the community. It helps to better protect residents.

Moreover, policies, like S.B. 977 deny ICE critical assistance to enable it to accomplish its statutorily mandated mission to identify and ultimately remove illegal aliens who are currently in state or local custody. ICE has more than 20,000 employees, but less than half are dedicated to the apprehension and removal of illegal aliens. The cooperation of state and local law enforcement, which number about 900,000 strong, is vital to ferreting out those among us who are here illegally and who wish to cause us harm. At least five of the 9/11 hijackers were illegal aliens, four of whom came into contact with state and local law enforcement several times before the attacks, in some cases just days prior to the attack.<sup>1</sup> If those state and local law enforcement officers had worked with federal immigration officials, the 9/11 terrorist plot might have been thwarted.

Bills like SB 977 tell criminal aliens that despite violating federal laws, law enforcement and other government officials will ignore them. Just because the regulation of immigration is a federal issue, does not mean that state and local law enforcement agencies must overlook immigration violations that harm their communities. State and local officials cooperate with the federal law enforcement in every aspect, such as gun control and drug laws, and immigration enforcement should not be an exception.

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<sup>11</sup> CNN, "Another Hijacker Was Stopped for Traffic Violation, January 9, 2002

To ensure the safety of our communities, state and local law enforcement and governments should be encouraged—not discouraged—from cooperating with federal immigration authorities. For these reasons, FAIR opposes SB 977.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my input. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if I may be of assistance. I may be reached by email at [srendall@fairus.org](mailto:srendall@fairus.org) or by phone at 202-328-7004.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shari Rendall". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of "Shari" being a large, stylized capital "S".

Shari Rendall