



Center for Salud/Health and Opportunity for Latinos
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
Center for Child and Community Health Research
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SB 977

Favorable

TO: Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Centro SOL

DATE: February 19, 2025

Centro SOL is pleased to offer a 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).

Centro SOL (Center for Health and Opportunity for Latinos at Johns Hopkins) is committed to promoting equity in health and providing high quality care to all of our patients including the large and growing Latino population in the State of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB1431. Note: This testimony does not necessarily represent the views of Johns Hopkins University.

In recent years, the erosion of data privacy protections has led to increased fear and uncertainty within immigrant communities. 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.

The current culture of fear and mistrust of government agencies undermines our ability to conduct important research within the Latino community in Baltimore. If the immigrant community does not feel comfortable participating in our studies and trust that their information will remain confidential, the validity and effectiveness of our research will suffer greatly. It is essential that our research continue within this underserved community so that we can continue to adequately address the stark health disparities that exist.

Centro SOL stands with immigrant communities and supports the Maryland Data Privacy Act because it will:

1. **Limit Access to Databases and Facilities:** Law enforcement agencies and state or local government units must deny access to sensitive data and facilities to individuals seeking to enforce federal immigration law without a valid court-issued warrant.
2. **Protect Personal Information:** The Act prohibits the disclosure of personal data, photographs, and biometric information, such as facial recognition scans, to federal immigration authorities unless due legal processes are followed.



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3. **Provide Accountability and Transparency:** Agencies must maintain records of all access requests and submit annual reports to the Attorney General and the General Assembly to ensure compliance and transparency.
4. **Ensure Enforcement and Penalties:** The Attorney General is empowered to enforce these protections, with civil penalties for violations and disciplinary actions for state employees who fail to comply.

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.

In 2021, this legislature took action to protect immigrants and safeguard their sensitive data. **Centro SOL** once again calls on this legislature to act.

Centro SOL urges the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 977.

Signatures:

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