

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Maryland General Assembly
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for House Bill 1222 – Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act) – Favorable with Amendments

Dear Chair Clippinger and Esteemed Committee Members,

At Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), we are steadfast in our commitment to advocating for the rights and dignity of Latino and immigrant communities throughout our state. Our mission is to promote equity, justice, and community empowerment, ensuring that all residents, regardless of their immigration status, are treated with fairness and respect. Through our direct services, community engagement, and advocacy efforts, we have witnessed firsthand the detrimental impact that entanglement between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities has on our communities.

House Bill 1222, the Maryland Values Act, embodies the principles of fairness, dignity, and justice that are central to our state's identity. By seeking to end programs like 287(g), this legislation aims to prevent the diversion of local resources into federal deportation agendas, thereby preserving the trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement. We have observed that when local agencies act as extensions of federal immigration enforcement, it leads to racial profiling, wrongful detentions, and a pervasive fear that deters individuals from reporting crimes or seeking essential services.

However, while we strongly support the intent of HB 1222, we recommend amendments to remove Sections 9-309(A), 9-309(B), and 5-104(5). These provisions mandate detention and transfer protocols that have been flagged by courts and the Maryland Attorney General as potentially unconstitutional, exposing local governments to significant legal liabilities. Detaining individuals beyond their scheduled release for civil immigration matters not only infringes upon constitutional rights but also misallocates state resources. By eliminating these sections, Maryland can uphold due process and ensure that our criminal justice system remains distinct from federal immigration enforcement.

In our work, we have encountered numerous instances where community members, fearing deportation, hesitate to engage with law enforcement, even when they are victims or witnesses of crimes. This reluctance undermines public safety and erodes the social fabric of our communities. By passing HB 1222 with the recommended amendments, Maryland can reinforce its commitment to protecting all residents, fostering an environment where trust in public institutions is restored.

We urge the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1222, incorporating the suggested amendments. This action will affirm Maryland's dedication to justice, equity, and the well-being of all its communities.

Sincerely,

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