



CASA Testimony in OPPOSITION of House Bill 85

State and Local Government - Sanctuary Policies and Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law
(Rachel Morin Act)

February 19, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Clippinger and Members of the Committee,

CASA strongly opposes House Bill 85 - State and Local Government - Sanctuary Policies and Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law (Rachel Morin Act). CASA is a national powerhouse organization building power and improving the quality of life in working-class: Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities.

With a membership of over 173,000 members, CASA creates change with its power-building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. For nearly forty years, CASA has employed grassroots community organizing to bring our communities closer together and fight for justice, while simultaneously providing much-needed services.

First and foremost, our hearts go out to Rachel Morin's family and community. The loss of any life is a tragedy, and moments like these remind us of the preciousness of life and the importance of coming together in grief and solidarity. We are heartbroken anytime a person is taken from their loved ones, and we recognize the need for community support and healing in times of sorrow. Every victim deserves justice, and we stand with those seeking accountability and healing.

In this moment of tragedy, we must also recognize the dangers of sweeping generalizations. Individual actions do not define entire communities. Attempting to use one horrific crime to justify broad, punitive immigration policies is both irresponsible and harmful. These narratives fuel division and hate—distracting from the real issues at play and scapegoating entire groups of people rather than addressing the root causes of crime, such as poverty, lack of education, and insufficient social services.

House Bill 85 seeks to repeal existing legal protections that prevent local law enforcement from engaging in federal immigration enforcement, prohibit sanctuary policies, and mandate local

cooperation with ICE. It also threatens to withhold state funding from counties and municipalities that fail to comply - coercing these local governments into adjusting their legal immigration policies. The bill presents several concerns:

HB85 undermines public safety. Forcing collaboration between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities erodes trust within immigrant communities. When individuals fear that any interaction with the police may lead to deportation, they are far less likely to report crimes, serve as witnesses, or seek protection from law enforcement. This damages community policing efforts and makes everyone less safe. CASA has long testified before the Judiciary Committee about the deep harm local and state law enforcement partnership with ICE.

HB85 misallocates critical local resources. Immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility. HB 85 would divert local law enforcement resources—already stretched thin—from addressing urgent public safety needs to carrying out federal immigration directives. This shift comes with significant financial costs, as localities would bear the burden of added staffing, training, and detention expenses.

HB85 promotes a dangerous and divisive narrative. This bill is part of a broader effort to stoke fear and demonize immigrant communities. Instead of focusing on the real factors that drive crime, HB 85 uses a single tragedy to push a political agenda that does nothing to make Maryland safer. Policies like this perpetuate cycles of violence by deepening the marginalization of immigrant communities rather than addressing the systemic issues that impact crime rates.

Maryland has a history of promoting policies that have protected immigrant communities, kept families together, and fought to reject xenophobic agendas. HB85 is inconsistent with these values.

CASA respectfully requests an unfavorable report on HB 85.