

February 27, 2025

Maryland House Judiciary Committee

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1431 – Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)

Dear Honorable Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Committee,

The National Immigration Law Center (NILC) is pleased to offer our strong support for the Maryland Data Privacy Act (HB 1431), which protects consumer privacy and advances the goals of state and local programs by ensuring that eligible residents are not deterred from securing critical services.

NILC is dedicated to defending and advancing the rights and opportunities of low-income immigrants and their families. For over 40 years, NILC has focused on issues that affect the well-being and economic security of low-income immigrants: health care and safety net programs, education and training, workers' rights, and other federal and state policies affecting immigrants. We believe that all people should have the opportunity to participate fully in their communities – regardless of their race, gender, immigration, or economic status.

The erosion of data privacy in recent years has increased fear and uncertainty among immigrant families. The Maryland Data Privacy Act (HB 1431) helps address these concerns by restricting access to personal information, facial recognition data and access to state and local facilities for federal immigration enforcement purposes, in the absence of a valid judicial warrant. It protects personal data, photographs and biometric information, and promotes transparency by requiring that requests for such information or access be recorded. It authorizes the state Attorney General to enforce these protections, with civil penalties for violations and disciplinary actions for employees who fail to comply. These accountability measures will help reassure consumers that their privacy will be protected if they interact with government agencies. The Act would allow state and local agencies to focus on their mission, by helping to ensure that eligible individuals feel more comfortable seeking services and reporting crimes.

We have witnessed the harmful effects of deterring access to services, due to fears that consumers' privacy will be compromised or that contact with government agencies will place

them or their family at risk.¹ This chilling effect undermines state and local efforts to protect public health, promote road safety, assist victims of crimes, provide disaster relief and perform other critical functions.

Because immigrants and citizens live together in families and communities, our health and well-being are interconnected. By addressing concerns that deter families from seeking state and local services, the Maryland Data Privacy Act will strengthen the institutions that are central to a community's success. States across the country increasingly are taking steps to defend the privacy of consumers, including immigrant families. This "good government" principle will improve Maryland's ability to protect and serve all residents.

We therefore urge the committee to vote YES on HB 1431.

Respectfully,

Tanya Broder, Senior Counsel
National Immigration Law Center

Matthew Lopas, Director of State Advocacy
National Immigration Law Center

¹ See, e.g. [Latino migrants' healthcare use in the US and perceived immigration laws and consequences: A multivariable analysis](#) Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease (Nov.–Dec. 2023). [Fearing deportation, many domestic violence victims are steering clear of police and courts](#) Los Angeles Times (Oct. 9, 2017).