

Tuesday, February 25, 2025



Showing Up for Racial Justice

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore, a group of individuals working to mobilize white people in a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland, an immigration advocacy and assistance organization based in Maryland. I am a resident of Baltimore City and District 41. I am testifying in **support of HB1222 - the Maryland Values Act.**

The Maryland Values Act would terminate 287(g) agreements currently active in Cecil, Hartford, and Frederick Counties that allow local law enforcement to check immigration status and detain individuals suspected of being undocumented. These agreements have several proven negative impacts, including increasing ineffective practices like racial profiling, stoking community fear, disrupting and misdirecting local policing priorities, decreasing children's engagement in education, and violating civil rights. These harmful effects often disproportionately impact Latino and Black communities.

The 287(g) agreement active in Frederick County resulted in significant racial profiling and a resulting "chilling effect" in Hispanic communities. Shifting resources to support 287(g) has led to "wrongful detainment, racial profiling and fear of retaliation for speaking out against the program." Due to this agreement, local law enforcement focuses on people with minor criminal histories, steering resources away from targeting violent crime.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found in 2009 and 2010 that 287(g) agreements under the task force model in their state were primarily used to target individuals who "posed no threat to public safety or individuals with no criminal record. Overall, 33% of individuals detained through the 287(g) program were charged with traffic violations; in Gaston County the figure rose to 57%." This illustrates that these agreements are not an appropriate allocation of public resources, and that they are instead an example of racist policy aiming to terrorize Black and Latino communities.

The last Trump administration massively expanded these harmful programs nationwide despite urban areas citing costs and negative impacts on community relations. The American Immigration Council cites that ICE already has proven ineffective at following federal policies put in place to attempt to curb these negative effects. DHS removed expiration dates and other guardrails that provided any attempted reforms and changes to the agreements under the Obama administration. This is likely to occur again to the reforms the Biden administration put into effect.

Ending this program is essential for restoring public trust and protecting all Marylanders. Maryland's large immigrant community makes up nearly a third of all Maryland healthcare support workers, a third of the state's building maintenance and groundskeepers, and supports a thriving and diverse small business community. In 2018, Maryland's immigrant communities were contributing \$8 billion in federal and \$4 billion in state taxes, providing \$2 billion in business revenue from entrepreneurship, and added tens of billions to Maryland's economy with their purchasing power. We are stronger when our immigrant communities feel safe and supported in our cities and state. Under this current political climate, protections are needed more now than ever.

We urge the removal of Sections 9-309(A), 9-309(B) and 5-104(5). These provisions mandate detention and transfer, which courts and the Maryland Attorney General have flagged as likely unconstitutional, exposing local governments to potential liability. Holding individuals past their scheduled release for civil immigration matters violates individuals' constitutional rights, making it unlawful. In addition to being unlawful, delayed release and transfer result in wasted state resources. Maryland must uphold due process and disentangle immigration enforcement from the criminal justice system.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in **support of HB1222 - the Maryland Values Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Dr. Katherine Blaha
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