GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL

Emmett V. Jordan, *Mayor*

Kristen L.K. Weaver, *Mayor Pro Tem*

Amy Knesel

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Position Statement – Support – SB977 - State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)

The City of Greenbelt strongly supports Senate Bill 977, which is essential in safeguarding the privacy and civil rights of Maryland residents. This bill addresses a critical concern by limiting the ability of state and local agencies to share personal information, photographs, and other sensitive data with federal agencies for the purpose of enforcing federal immigration laws. Greenbelt recognizes the importance of preserving residents' privacy while also ensuring that local law enforcement can operate without fear of unintended consequences related to federal immigration actions.

In our commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all community members, Greenbelt has long recognized the need for protections against unwarranted federal surveillance. Senate Bill 977 is a significant step in ensuring that personal data held by state and local agencies cannot be used inappropriately by federal authorities unless they possess a valid court-issued warrant. This protection is especially vital in maintaining a sense of security among immigrant populations who may be hesitant to engage with local authorities or access services out of fear that their information could be shared with federal immigration enforcement.

Moreover, this bill reinforces the principle of local autonomy, allowing Greenbelt and other local governments to make decisions that best reflect the values and needs of our communities. Local agencies should not be compelled to participate in federal immigration enforcement unless there is a clear legal requirement to do so. By enacting Senate Bill 977, Maryland will ensure that local resources are not diverted from public safety efforts and instead remain focused on serving the needs of residents in a manner that fosters trust and collaboration.

Another key benefit of Senate Bill 977 is its capacity to build trust between local law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Immigrant families are more likely to report crimes and engage with law enforcement if they feel their personal data will not be used against them for immigration purposes. Senate Bill 977 will create a safer and more inclusive environment in which all residents, regardless of immigration status, can feel secure in their interactions with local authorities.

Finally, the bill establishes a system of accountability by tracking requests for access to sensitive data and requiring reporting to the Attorney General. This oversight ensures transparency in the use of personal information and provides mechanisms for addressing any violations of the law. The inclusion of penalties for state employees who improperly share information further reinforces the integrity of the bill's protections and emphasizes the importance of adhering to its provisions.

In conclusion, the City of Greenbelt believes Senate Bill 977 is vital for ensuring the privacy, safety, and trust of our residents. By restricting the sharing of personal data between state and local agencies

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and federal immigration authorities, this bill will help preserve the rights of all Maryland residents and strengthen community relationships with law enforcement. We urge the Maryland General Assembly to pass Senate Bill 977, as it will make our state a safer, more inclusive place for all who call it home.

For questions or more information, please contact Josué Salmerón, City Manager, at jsalmeron@greenbeltmd.gov.