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The Honorable Members of the House Committee

Maryland General Assembly, Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony in Opposition to HB1188 - Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement - Cooperation

Hearing Date: March 05, 2025

Chairperson and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

My name is Maureen Wambui, and I am a proud Immigrant, Parent, Community advocate and resident of Legislative District 8 in Maryland. I am honored to submit testimony **strongly oppose House Bill 1188 (HB1188)**. This bill mandates law enforcement agencies to cooperate with federal immigration authorities, effectively transforming Maryland into a state that fully enforces federal immigration laws. While framed as a public safety measure, HB1188 would have harmful consequences for immigrant communities, local law enforcement, and public trust.

Reasons for Opposition:

1. HB1188 Mirrors the 287(g) Program, Forcing Local Law Enforcement to Become Immigration Agents

This bill mandates that Maryland law enforcement agencies conduct NCIC background checks on individuals in custody and report undocumented immigrants to federal authorities. This requirement mirrors the controversial 287(g) program, which deputizes local officers to act as immigration agents. The difference? 287(g) is voluntary, but HB1188 would force all Maryland jurisdictions to comply, removing local control over policing policies.

2. HB1188 Will Erode Trust Between Immigrant Communities and Law Enforcement

When local law enforcement is required to act as an extension of ICE, immigrants, including those with legal status, will fear any interaction with the police. This will lead to underreporting of crimes, reduced cooperation with investigations, and overall weaker public safety. Community trust is a cornerstone of effective policing, and HB1188 would destroy that trust.

3. The Bill Encourages Racial Profiling and Disproportionate Targeting of Black and Brown Immigrants

Studies show that immigration enforcement policies disproportionately target Black and Latino immigrants. By mandating cooperation with federal authorities, HB1188 will lead to racial profiling, wrongful detentions, and unnecessary deportations, even in cases where individuals are not convicted of a crime.

4. HB1188 Overrules Local Policies That Protect Immigrants and Public Safety

Several Maryland counties have policies limiting ICE cooperation to ensure fair treatment of all residents. HB1188 would override these local policies, stripping counties of their ability to decide how best to balance public safety and community trust.

5. HB1188 Will Increase Family Separations and Economic Hardship

Undocumented immigrants are deeply embedded in Maryland's workforce, particularly in industries like construction, healthcare, and food services. By funneling more immigrants into the deportation system, HB1188 will lead to family separations, job losses, and economic instability for communities across the state.

HB1188 is an unnecessary and harmful piece of legislation that forces Maryland law enforcement into federal immigration enforcement, undermines trust in police, and puts immigrant families at risk. Instead of prioritizing policies that foster safety and inclusiveness, this bill takes Maryland in the wrong direction.

I urge this committee to reject HB1188 and stand with Maryland's diverse communities by opposing policies that promote fear and division.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Wambui