

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 977

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

House Judiciary Committee

March 24, 2025

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

I am a resident of Mount Rainier, Maryland, commenting as an individual and wish to offer a favorable testimony in strong support of SB 977. I am a physician in Maryland and treated many patients with limited resources or insurance when I was the Program Director at Prince George's Hospital Center. Currently I am an active member of the Medical Care Section of the American Public Health Association (APHA) and more locally with Doctors for Camp Closure. I have treated patients from several different countries including Cameroon, El Salvador, Viet Nam and India. It is important that all people seeking medical care trust that they are safe with their doctors and hospitals. Their concern about how their personal demographic and medical information will be shared is an example of how important it is that their privacy be maintained. Without trust patients do not seek medical care such as my patient with kidney stones who refused to be hospitalized until he became septic from a fulminating abscess. A neighbor required encouragement to take his 3 year old daughter for care for strabismus that was limiting her vision and ultimately required surgical correction.

Previous legislation has addressed data privacy in some areas. But in recent years, the erosion of data privacy protections has led to increased fear and uncertainty for both citizens and more recent immigrants. The Maryland Data Privacy Act takes critical steps to restore trust by ensuring that state and local agencies, as well as law enforcement entities, are prohibited from sharing personal information, facial recognition data, and access to public facilities with federal immigration authorities unless a valid warrant is presented. This bill helps to ensure my patients' and my neighbors' privacy by empowering the Attorney General to enforce these protections.

SB977 strengthens the previous 2021 and 2024 legislation and will help immigrants from multiple countries to seek care they need. It will also facilitate the work of doctors, social workers, nurses and other agencies to provide adequate treatment and support. I look forward to hearing that the House Judiciary Committee gives this bill a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

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