

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Yasmine Juhar, and I am a student at Montgomery College, a diverse institution known for its inclusivity and opportunities for students from all backgrounds. I reside in Silver Spring, Maryland, in District 14, and as a constituent, I strongly support SB0977.

The main reason for my support is my deep concern about the current climate and rhetoric surrounding immigrant communities in our country and state.

As the child of immigrant parents, I have witnessed firsthand the struggles and hardships that many immigrant families face. Montgomery College has been a place of refuge and empowerment for me, where I've had the opportunity to grow, organize, and advocate for change. However, as we continue to navigate this current administration, I have become increasingly uneasy about the current state of affairs, which seems to encourage fear and distrust toward immigrants and marginalized communities.

Unfortunately, this is not a new phenomenon. The cycle of targeting immigrant communities, fueled by misinformation and fear, has existed for many years. I recall hearing stories from my mother about the propaganda of fear and Islamophobia that emerged in the aftermath of 9/11, when misinformation about Muslims and immigrants spread like wildfire, causing serious harm and distrust.

In 2017, the country witnessed the Muslim Ban, an executive order that furthered this climate of fear and division. At its core, this issue is not about safety or protecting people, but rather about choosing fear over understanding and using that fear as an excuse to harm communities that are seen as "different." We saw this then, and we are seeing it again today, where those who seek to make a better life for themselves and their families are vilified and pushed to the margins of society.

As an immigrant rights advocate and student leader, I have had the privilege of working alongside others who are passionate about creating spaces for people of all backgrounds, including those who are undocumented, refugees, and those seeking asylum. I've seen firsthand how communities of immigrants contribute to the fabric of our society—whether in classrooms, workplaces, or communities. I want these contributions to be recognized over the fear-based policies that target immigrant communities.

I implore you, as legislators and community leaders, to stand against these divisive measures and support SB0977 as a step forward. This measure is not only essential to preserving the trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement, but it also ensures that individuals are not subject to unlawful surveillance and profiling simply based on their immigration status.

This issue is personal to me. It is about my parents, my peers, and my community. It is about choosing compassion over fear, unity over division, and strength over weakness. Immigrants are not a threat to our safety—they are a part of what makes this country, and this state, great.

