Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1431

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

February 27, 2025

My name is Maria Baltodano, I am a domestic worker and proud member of the National Domestic Workers Alliance. I am pleased to offer **a favorable testimony** in **strong support** of **HB1431- State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act).**

I immigrated to this country from Nicaragua 11 years ago in 2004 and have been here since then. I am a domestic worker, and a proud member of the National Domestic Workers Alliance DMV Chapter–the leading voice for domestic workers–including nannies, house cleaners, and homecare workers in the United States. I am here today in full support of HB1431 to protect sensitive data from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) because even though I am fortunate enough to be a permanent resident of this country, many of our immigrant neighbors and community members other immigrants do not have documentation in this country.

In recent years, the erosion of data privacy protections has led to increased fear and uncertainty within immigrant communities. The Maryland Data Privacy Act **HB1431** 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.

Currently, there is a lot of fear in the immigrant community. I hear from my friends who are undocumented that they are afraid to leave their houses right now because of the threat of deportation. The truth is that many people have left their countries in search of a better life for themselves and their families. Many are running from dangerous conditions in their countries and look to the United States as a safe haven. Yet, the last couple of weeks have felt very scary for many.

I have raised and had my children in this country. I have planted my roots here and I can't imagine what it would be like to be separated from my family. Yet, this is the truth for my undocumented brothers and sisters that run the risk of deportation.

I stand with immigrant communities and support the Maryland Data Privacy Act because it will:

1. **Limit Access to Databases and Facilities:** Law enforcement agencies and state or local government units must deny access to sensitive data and facilities to individuals seeking to enforce federal immigration law without a valid court-issued warrant.
2. **Protect Personal Information:** The Act prohibits the disclosure of personal data, photographs, and biometric information, such as facial recognition scans, to federal immigration authorities unless due legal processes are followed.

3. **Provide Accountability and Transparency:** Agencies must maintain records of all access requests and submit annual reports to the Attorney General and the General Assembly to ensure compliance and transparency.
4. **Ensure Enforcement and Penalties:** The Attorney General is empowered to enforce these protections, with civil penalties for violations and disciplinary actions for state employees who fail to comply.

This legislation is crucial not only for protecting the privacy of all Maryland residents but also for fostering trust between immigrant communities and public institutions. By clearly delineating the boundaries of federal immigration enforcement within our state, we promote the values of dignity, safety, and fairness.

In 2021, this legislature took action to protect immigrants and safeguard their sensitive data. I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on HB1431.