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ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

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Date: February 25, 2025

Re: HBI222 - Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)

Position: **SUPPORT**

To: The Maryland House Judiciary Committee

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

My name is Mike Hilliard, and I served for 27 years with the Baltimore Police Department working in patrol, narcotics, internal affairs, youth programs, and later as a Major overseeing 911 operations. After retiring from law enforcement, I continued serving my community as the Community Services Director at HARBEL, a nonprofit focused on crime prevention, addiction recovery, and neighborhood support.

I'm here today on behalf of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP) in strong support of HBI222, the Maryland Values Act. LEAP is a nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety, promoting alternatives to arrest and incarceration, addressing the root causes of crime, and working toward healing police-community relations.

Public safety depends on trust between law enforcement and the people we serve. When community members are afraid that calling the police could lead to an immigration inquiry, cooperation with law enforcement breaks down. Throughout my career, I have seen firsthand how important it is for people to feel safe reporting crimes, coming forward as witnesses, and engaging with officers without fear. When that trust erodes, crimes go unreported, victims stay silent, and dangerous offenders remain on the streets.

This is why local law enforcement should not be in the business of immigration enforcement. Our role is to protect and serve the community, not act as federal

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Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

immigration agents. [Programs like 287\(g\) blur that line, making it harder for officers to build relationships with the people they are sworn to protect.](#) We have seen cases where individuals, even victims of serious crimes like domestic violence and assault, refused to call 911 because they feared an interaction with law enforcement could lead to deportation. When that happens, the entire community suffers.

Beyond the trust issue, 287(g) agreements also waste valuable local law enforcement resources. Officers already face the challenge of investigating violent crime, responding to emergencies, and addressing community concerns. Every officer assigned to immigration enforcement is one fewer officer available to handle those critical responsibilities. [These agreements also create unnecessary financial burdens for local agencies,](#) forcing them to dedicate time, training, and detention space to federal immigration enforcement rather than local priorities.

287(g) agreements raise serious legal and constitutional concerns by entangling local governments in federal immigration enforcement. [Counties across the country, including in Maryland, have faced legal challenges and financial settlements over wrongful detentions tied to 287\(g\) agreements.](#) The Maryland Attorney General and legal experts have warned that provisions mandating detention and transfer under 287(g) create constitutional risks and legal liability for local agencies. Removing Sections 9-309(A), 9-309(B), and 5-104(5) ensures that Maryland upholds constitutional rights while avoiding unnecessary legal and financial burdens on law enforcement.

HBI222 is a public safety bill. It will restore trust in law enforcement, ensure that officers focus on the crimes that truly impact Maryland communities, and protect the state from costly lawsuits tied to constitutional violations. Ending 287(g) agreements will help officers do their jobs more effectively while keeping communities safer for everyone.

As a former police officer and community leader, I urge this committee to support HBI222. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Maj. Mike Hilliard (Ret.)
Baltimore Police Department, Maryland
Speaker, Law Enforcement Action Partnership