

Testimony on HB 1222 - Favorable with Amendments
HB 1222- Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)

House Judiciary Committee

February 27, 2025

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

Ingrid L. Diaz Lopez offers a **favorable with amendment** testimony in support of **HB 1222- Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)**

I live and work in Salisbury, MD. My commitment to keeping families together and protecting immigrants' rights is deeply personal and driven by both my experiences and my work. I currently work at an organization that provides essential resources for families, where I have met many individuals who immigrated to the U.S. in search of a better life. I was once one of those individuals, so I understand firsthand the challenges of starting over in a new country—learning a new language, adapting to a different culture, and, unfortunately, facing discrimination simply because of my background. At the core of my beliefs is the conviction that all people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. We are all human, and no one should be judged or mistreated based on their ethnicity or immigration status. It is disheartening to see how prejudice and misinformation lead to unfair treatment of immigrants, creating unnecessary fear and division. Additionally, I have seen how this environment of hostility affects children, many of whom experience heightened anxiety due to concerns about their families being separated. No child should have to live with that fear. That is why I am committed to advocating for policies and initiatives that protect immigrant families and promote a society built on inclusion, compassion, and equal opportunity for all.

At its core, this bill is about upholding Maryland's values—fairness, dignity, and justice for all. The Maryland Values Act affirms that our state should not be in the business of tearing families apart, undermining public trust, or funneling state and local resources into a federal deportation agenda. Instead, Maryland should stand firm in its commitment to community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law - by ending 287(g).

The 287(g) program has a well-documented history of racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detentions. It diverts local law enforcement from their primary duty of protecting public safety, forcing them to act as immigration agents rather than community protectors. This erodes trust, particularly among immigrant communities, making people less likely to report crimes or seek help when needed. Ending 287(g) ensures Maryland's resources are used to foster public safety—not help the federal deportation agenda.

I have recently noticed a rise in hostility within the community, where individuals make harmful assumptions about Hispanic people, unfairly associating them with criminal activity solely based on their appearance. While I am certain that racism has always existed, it seems to

have intensified following the recent change in presidency. More people now feel emboldened to openly express their prejudices, looking down on the immigrant community as if such behavior is acceptable. As a U.S. citizen, I have personally experienced the impact of this racial profiling. I often notice people looking at me as if I do not belong, as if I am automatically a criminal. The prevalence of racial profiling is deeply troubling, and no one should have the right to treat others with such disrespect or instill anxiety and fear in them. It is heartbreaking to witness the amount of hatred that exists, much of which stems from ignorance and a lack of understanding. While it is true that criminals exist in every community, it is unfair and unjust to generalize an entire group based on the actions of a few. Many immigrants come to this country seeking a better life for their families, working tirelessly to provide necessities such as food, shelter, and education. Their contributions and sacrifices deserve respect, not unwarranted suspicion or discrimination. It is crucial that we take the time to educate ourselves, challenge harmful stereotypes, and foster a more inclusive and compassionate society.

Amendment Recommendation: As part of the Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, we urge the removal of Sections 9-309(A), 9-309(B) and 5-104(5). These provisions mandate detention and transfer, which courts and the Maryland Attorney General have flagged as likely unconstitutional, exposing local governments to potential liability. Holding individuals past their scheduled release for civil immigration matters violates individuals' constitutional rights, making it unlawful. In addition to being unlawful, delayed release and transfer result in wasted state resources. Maryland must uphold due process and disentangle immigration enforcement from the criminal justice system.”

I urge the committee to provide a favorable report with amendments on HB 1222.