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The Honorable Luke Clippinger
House Judiciary Committee
100-101 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Testimony of Trans Maryland

IN SUPPORT OF

House Bill #1431: State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law
- Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and honorable members of the House Judiciary Committee:

Trans Maryland is a multi-racial, multi-gender, trans-led community power-building organization dedicated to Maryland's trans community. Trans Maryland runs the state's largest name and gender marker change program, offering peer-to-peer guidance and financial assistance to Marylanders seeking a name and gender marker change. As part of this work, we have helped hundreds of transgender Marylanders, including trans immigrants, and we have witnessed firsthand the barriers they face navigating life in our State.

This legislation supports basic human rights for safety and dignity. Maryland must protect our data to ensure services and resources across the State can be safely used by all. For trans immigrants, who face discrimination both due to their transgender experience and their immigration experience, this legislation is especially urgent.

Trans Immigrants Experience Discrimination and Barriers to Resources

According to the [Williams Institute](#), there are approximately 174,200 transgender immigrants in the United States. The reasons trans immigrants come to the US are diverse and cannot be reduced to a single narrative. For many, immigrating to the US is a matter of survival and a means to escape life-threatening persecution because of their trans identity. Others seek refuge from poverty, which is exacerbated by marginalization based on their gender identity. Some were brought here as children, growing up in the only home they have ever known, yet now face the devastating threat of deportation to an unfamiliar country.

Trans people in Maryland experience violence and victimization at alarming rates. The [Maryland Trans Survey](#) found that over three-quarters (78.2%) of trans Marylanders experienced verbal assaults, over half (55.4%) have experienced threats of violence, and nearly half (46.1%) have experienced physical and/or sexual assault.

Trans immigrants exist at the intersection of compounded marginalization, facing unique and intensified barriers to basic needs fulfillment and resources. The [National Transgender Discrimination Survey](#) reveals that undocumented transgender individuals experience even greater risks of discrimination and violence within employment, housing, healthcare, or even within their own homes. The [Maryland Trans Survey](#) also revealed that three quarters (75.1%) trans Marylanders felt uncomfortable with potentially asking police for help in an emergency and about a quarter (22.5%) said they would not call 911 if they were a victim of a crime. Over two-thirds (67.2%) specified that discomfort with using emergency services was connected to their trans identity. Data also highlighted barriers accessing healthcare, legal services, and other supports.

For trans immigrants, this reality could be even more pronounced today as fear of deportation or immigration enforcement, particularly with recent actions at the Federal level, discourages them from seeking assistance, leaving them with even less access to resources.

Protecting Data Privacy is Critical for the Lives of Trans Immigrants

HB 1431 is a necessary step in safeguarding critical data and protecting the privacy of all Marylanders from the inhumane effects of immigration enforcement, which disproportionately impacts marginalized communities. With [17% of Maryland's population being immigrants](#), protections against invasions of privacy are essential.

Trans immigrants are also often denied basic immigration rights such as the right to seek asylum or gain permanent residency through spousal sponsorship. When placed in immigration detention facilities, they face the possibility of being detained under dangerous conditions. [April Amaya-Luis](#), a 43-year-old transwoman from Mexico, has lived in the U.S. for 25 years. While complying with a parole check-in on February 4th in Kent County, Maryland, she was arrested by ICE for her undocumented status. She is currently being detained in Miami, Florida in an all-male facility in solitary confinement.

Her story underscores the daily dangers trans immigrants face simply living their lives. Because trans immigrants experience compounded marginalization and limited access to essential resources, it is especially critical to protect and maintain safe access to resources. Protecting data privacy is a critical step toward safeguarding the dignity, safety, and rights of some of the most vulnerable members of our communities and safeguarding access to vital resources for trans immigrants without fear of detention or deportation.

Trans immigrants are our friends, colleagues, and neighbors, and they deserve to live safely and with dignity as they contribute to communities across Maryland. As a state that values equity and seeks to leave no one behind, Maryland must protect data privacy. For these reasons, we urge a **favorable report** on HB 1431.