

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1006

HB 1006 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

House Judiciary Proceedings Committee

February 25, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Fatima Nycole Hidalgo, and I am pleased to offer a favorable testimony in strong support of HB 1006 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act).

I immigrated to the US from Ecuador when I was 6 years old and have called Maryland home ever since. I am now a third-year medical student at the University of Maryland School of Medicine where I have the privilege to serve Baltimore's diverse patient population. Through both my personal and healthcare experiences, I have witnessed the emotional and physical consequences limited healthcare access has on my Latinx community.

For over a decade, federal policy limited Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activities in sensitive locations—such as hospitals, schools, courthouses, and places of worship—to prevent intimidation and ensure access to essential services. However, as of January 20, 2025, the revocation of these protections has left immigrant communities vulnerable to enforcement actions in spaces considered sanctuaries. This policy change creates an environment of fear and uncertainty, discouraging individuals from seeking medical care, pursuing education, or accessing legal resources. As a result, our communities, public health, and overall safety are at risk.

I was fortunate to grow up in Silver Spring, a diverse community where I formed friendships with classmates and neighbors who were undocumented immigrants. These hard-working individuals were the heart of our community. They were students who took AP classes in a language they learned years prior, and parents who worked laborious jobs building roads in our city while contributing taxes themselves. My school's diversity fostered a strong sense of humanism in our student body that encouraged growth, compassion, and ambition. In these

classrooms, I found the encouragement and support to pursue my dream of becoming a physician, knowing that my documentation status would never be questioned.

Stripping schools of their protection from ICE establishes a hostile environment that gives students, undocumented or not, yet another reason to fear for their safety. A system that is meant to keep children safe and foster opportunity should not become a source of fear and betrayal.

Throughout my healthcare experience, I have also witnessed how ICE can delay necessary medical care. In the emergency room, I treated a construction worker who came in with a painful foot rash after stepping on a nail at work. He admitted that he continued to work through the pain because he feared being asked for “papers” at the hospital. I assured him that this was a protected space, and he let out a sigh of relief. But by then, this minor wound progressed to a severe infection requiring an amputation. When he heard the news, he desperately asked, “how am I supposed to support my family?” It was disheartening to see that his fear of ICE outweighed his physical pain, ultimately costing him his quality of life and livelihood. No one should have to choose between seeking essential medical care or being separated from their family.

As a future physician in Maryland, I can attest that this legislation is essential. It upholds the values of equity and compassion that define the medical profession. When I took the Hippocratic Oath, I vowed to respect human life and do no harm. Allowing ICE to enter hospitals would be a violation of these core ethical principles.

I believe that HB 1006 aligns Maryland with its values of protecting life and treating all people with dignity, respect, and care. For these reasons, I **strongly urge** the committee to provide a **favorable report** on HB 1006.

Sincerely,

Fatima Nycole Hidalgo