



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 27, 2025

HB1222

Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)

Judiciary Committee

Position: Favorable with Amendment

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 1222 with Amendments**. Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

The Maryland Values Act establishes clear limitations on state and local involvement in federal immigration enforcement to protect immigrant communities and uphold principles of fairness and justice. Under this legislation, employees and agents of state and local correctional facilities, as well as law enforcement officers, may be required to detain and transfer an individual to federal immigration authorities under specific circumstances. However, the Act prohibits the state, local governments, county sheriffs, and their respective agencies or employees from entering into immigration enforcement agreements that would entangle state resources with federal immigration operations. Additionally, any existing agreements of this nature must be terminated by a specified date, ensuring that Maryland does not contribute to policies that create fear, distrust, and the unnecessary separation of families.

House Bill 1222 upholds the principles of human dignity, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity. The Church teaches that every person, regardless of immigration status, possesses inherent dignity and should not be subjected to unjust detention, deportation, or separation from their families. By restricting the cooperation of state and local entities with federal immigration enforcement, this bill safeguards communities from the disproportionate harm and trauma that aggressive immigration policies inflict on vulnerable families. The preferential option for the poor and marginalized calls upon society to defend and uplift those who are at greatest risk, particularly immigrants who often face economic hardship, discrimination, and legal uncertainty.

Furthermore, the principle of subsidiarity emphasizes that governance should occur at the most local level possible, ensuring that state and local resources are used to protect communities rather than enforce federal mandates that do not align with local priorities or moral imperatives. When local law enforcement engages in immigration enforcement, it erodes trust between immigrant communities and the institutions meant to serve and protect them, leading to underreporting of crimes and increased vulnerability to exploitation. The Maryland Values Act

prioritizes public safety by ensuring that all residents—regardless of status—feel safe accessing law enforcement, emergency services, and essential community resources.

By affirming Maryland’s commitment to justice, compassion, and human dignity, **House Bill 1222** fosters stronger, safer, and more inclusive communities where families can remain together, workers can contribute without fear, and all individuals can live with dignity. It aligns with the moral responsibility to welcome the stranger and seek the common good, ensuring that immigration enforcement does not come at the cost of humanity and fundamental rights.

Proposed amendment to strengthen Senate Bill 479

Amendment Recommendation: We urge the removal of Sections 9-309(A), 9-309(B), and 5-104(5). These provisions mandate detention and transfer under the 287(g) program—requirements that have been flagged by courts and the Maryland Attorney General as likely unconstitutional, exposing local governments to legal and financial liability. Holding individuals past their scheduled release for civil immigration matters violates fundamental due process protections and disregards the inherent dignity of the person. Moreover, detaining individuals beyond their lawful release wastes state resources that should be used to support rehabilitation, community safety, and restorative justice.

Maryland has a moral obligation to uphold due process, reject unjust detentions, and disentangle immigration enforcement from the criminal justice system. The preferential option for the poor and vulnerable calls on society to protect those most at risk of exploitation and discrimination, including immigrants who contribute to the fabric of our communities. True justice requires that public policy be guided by mercy, human dignity, and the promotion of the common good principles that demand the rejection of inhumane and unconstitutional practices like prolonged detention under 287(g).

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a Favorable with Amendment report on **House Bill 1222**.