

Date of Hearing: February 27th

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Testimony on HB 1222 - Favorable with Amendments

HB 1222- Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)

House Judiciary Committee

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

Below I offer a favorable with amendment testimony in support of HB 1222- Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act).

I am a proud resident of the diverse neighborhood of Charles Village in Baltimore, which includes a number of immigrants. I am also a primary care physician who sees patients at a community center in Baltimore, many of whom are undocumented immigrants.

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.

As a physician who treats the undocumented, I see many patients who are terrified to be caught by the state when they are just trying to live a better life. They stop coming to the doctor, or to get lab tests, or to pick up their medications – even to send their kids to school or attend their house of worship! – lest they be picked up off the street and deported. Our local law

enforcement are neither trained nor resourced to collaborate with Federal immigration police, nor should we allow them to collaborate with this unjust regime.

I recall the patients I saw in my work day today, all trying to work hard for their families, but all terrified that a false move could jeopardize their lives. Government should help, not hurt. We don't need immigration police in every corner of our lives. A person who has been alleged to commit a civil offense, like immigration against the law, should be served with a warrant by immigration police. We should not have our local law enforcement, untrained in the humane or considerate treatment of immigrants, do the work of anti-immigrant administrations.

Amendment Recommendation: As part of the Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, I urge the removal of Sections 9-309(A) and (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 legal risk. Holding individuals past their release for civil immigration matters is unlawful, and transfer often results in wrongful detention and wasted state resources. Maryland must uphold due process and disentangle immigration enforcement from the criminal justice system.

As our neighbors, immigrants deserve to be treated like anyone should be treated. Private, sensitive locations should be respected. Immigration police action should have humane and common-sense limits.. Thus I urge the committee to provide a favorable report with amendments on HB 1222.

Zackary Berger, MD, PhD