

February 25, 2025

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB1006/SB828, directing the Attorney General and state agencies to develop guidelines relating to immigration enforcement at certain sensitive locations, including schools, medical facilities and religious institutions.

Jews have always been committed to fairness and compassion for immigrants, having so often been immigrants ourselves over our long history. The biblical directive to welcome the stranger, or immigrant, is mentioned 36 times in the Torah. Based on this long-standing commitment to justice for immigrants, I strongly urge the Maryland legislature to endure that spaces like religious institutions, medical facilities and schools are a safe for immigrants to gather in our community, for learning, prayer, healing and access to social services.

In addition to our moral obligation to support and protect new arrivals, religious freedom is guaranteed by our United States Constitution. Thus, institutions like Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, where I am one of the rabbis, have a profound and enduring interest in ensuring that we can practice our faith, including welcoming people regardless of their immigration status into our worship service, our educational activities and our programming without fear of government intervention. Assuring that sensitive locations are free from government intrusion, including immigration enforcement, is a cornerstone of this nation's commitment to religious freedom.

I am proud to stand with Marylanders of all faiths and religions in urging you to pass HB1006/SB828 to protect sensitive spaces from immigration enforcement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elissa Sachs-Kohen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rabbi Elissa Sachs-Kohen