

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 828/HB 1006
SB 828 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies
(Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee

February 19, 2025

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

I, Margaret Briand, am pleased to offer **a favorable testimony in strong support of SB 828/HB 1006 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act).**

For more than 25 years, I have worked with immigrant communities as a public school teacher of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL or ELD). More than 20 of those years have been in Montgomery County Maryland, where I now live and teach. Although many experiences have been hard, in particular the Covid pandemic and aftermath, Trump's rescission of protected area policies is creating a climate of foreboding and fear that makes me very concerned.

Already, in mid-February, we are seeing attendance drop at our high school. Students have told me point blank they are afraid to come to school because they worry that ICE will be there. Today, a phone rang, and students all joked it must be ICE. The joke hides the fear. When students are learning in an atmosphere of fear, brain research and educational research shows that their achievement is stunted. Maryland teachers can be most successful when they teach in an environment in which students feel safe, where students can imagine themselves as part of a bright future.

The current national policies send a message that immigrants are "lesser than," which could not be further from the truth. Immigrants add richness and value to our community. Every day, I learn about strength, perseverance, integrity and compassion from my students and their families. My life—all our lives—would be so much poorer without them.

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 where they should feel safe.

This shift has already created an environment of fear and uncertainty, discouraging individuals from seeking medical care, pursuing education, accessing legal resources, or engaging with law enforcement. As a result, our communities, public health, and overall safety are at risk.

Imagine if ICE starts coming into school buildings. Students and staff will be in a state of panic. If some students are detained, others will stop coming to school at all. School days that rely on routine and structure will be disruptive and possibly violent. Many of our students are fleeing violence in their own countries. Others have lived through trauma abroad and here. The routine, predictability and calm of schools are crucial to student learning.

I stand with immigrant communities and support the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act because it will:

1. **Protect Access to Essential Services:** No one should have to choose between life-saving medical care and the risk of family separation. Children deserve to attend school without fear, and individuals must be able to seek justice in our courts without the threat of detention.
2. **Enhance Public Safety:** When immigrants feel safe accessing services and reporting crimes, our entire community benefits. Fear of enforcement discourages individuals from cooperating with law enforcement, which in turn hampers public safety efforts.
3. **Strengthen Community Trust:** By establishing clear boundaries for immigration enforcement, we foster trust between immigrant communities and the institutions meant to serve them. This trust is essential for maintaining a healthy, vibrant, and cohesive society.

I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 828/HB 1006.