

Testimony on HB 1222 - Favorable with Amendments
HB 1222 - Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)

House Judiciary Committee

Hearing date: February 27, 2025

From: Laura Atwood, Silver Spring, MD

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

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

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).

I'm a physical therapist and a longtime Maryland resident. I've spent enough time living and observing to appreciate that every person has a deep humanity that we must recognize—and I have also seen consequences of trauma play out for decades and even generations.

For too many people, deportation is a death sentence; detention here and/or in the deportation country represents loss of liberty; and anyone deported loses the freedom to spend time with their loved ones in the community that's been their home. And we also know it's all part of a larger racist, xenophobic, fear-mongering agenda that 287(g) feeds right into.

Never mind the family separation and childhood trauma that accompanies so many detentions and deportations.

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.

Amendment Recommendation: As part of the Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, we 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.

I urge the committee to provide a favorable report with amendments on HB 1222.