

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Maryland General Assembly
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for House Bill 1431 – State and Local Agencies - Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law - Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)

Dear Chair Clippinger and Esteemed Committee Members,

At Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), we are dedicated to advocating for the rights and privacy of Latino and immigrant communities across our state. We have witnessed firsthand the fear and mistrust that arise when personal information is accessed and utilized for federal immigration enforcement purposes. House Bill 1431, the Maryland Data Privacy Act, is a critical step toward safeguarding the personal data of all Maryland residents and ensuring that our state and local agencies are not complicit in actions that may lead to the unwarranted targeting of vulnerable populations.

This legislation mandates that law enforcement agencies and units of state or local government deny access to certain databases when the information is sought for enforcing federal immigration laws, except under specific circumstances. By restricting such access, HB 1431 aims to protect individuals' personal information from being used in ways that could result in family separations, deportations, and other adverse consequences. The bill also empowers the Attorney General to enforce these provisions and stipulates disciplinary actions for state employees who violate them.

For Maryland's Latino and immigrant communities, the enactment of HB 1431 would provide much-needed assurance that their personal data is protected from misuse. We have encountered numerous cases where individuals, fearing that their information might be shared with federal immigration authorities, avoid engaging with essential public services, including healthcare, education, and law enforcement. This reluctance not only jeopardizes their well-being but also undermines public safety and community trust.

By passing HB 1431, Maryland affirms its commitment to the privacy and dignity of all its residents. This legislation will foster an environment where individuals feel secure in accessing public services without the looming threat of their personal information being used against them. It also reinforces the principle that state and local resources should not be diverted to enforce federal immigration laws, especially in ways that compromise the rights and trust of our communities.

MLU stands ready to collaborate with state and local agencies to ensure the effective implementation of this act. Through community outreach and education, we will work to inform our constituents about their rights under this legislation and the protections it affords them.

We strongly urge the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1431. Enacting this bill is a decisive step toward upholding the privacy, trust, and well-being of all Maryland residents.

Sincerely,

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