



HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

COURAGE HONOR INTEGRITY

House Bill 1222 – Oppose

Public Safety- Immigration Enforcement

Letter of Opposition to the House Judiciary Committee

February 25, 2025

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Judiciary Committee, I am pleased to submit this letter of opposition to House Bill 1222.

Across our Country, public safety partners are sharing information and working cooperatively to identify and remove dangerous criminals who are in this Country illegally. In Harford County, we have proudly partnered with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for the last 8 years through our 287(g) Agreement.

In the form of some background, ICE's 287(g) Program was established under President Bill Clinton in the 1990s and has remained a vital public safety program and partnership for more than 30 years through each changing Presidential Administration. In fact, we were accepted into the Program under President Obama's expansion of 287(g) during his Administration. If this Bill were to pass, we would be forced to end that partnership, a partnership that has resulted in the removal of 100's of dangerous criminals from our Harford County Community.

The voters of Maryland spoke clearly in a survey just last month when an overwhelming majority (76%) said they wanted illegal immigrants who commit crimes to be identified and deported. I am hopefully that this Committee will support the will of the people and public safety to ensure we have the ability to work cooperatively with all of our federal partners to keep our communities safe.

Sadly, and needlessly, our community has witnessed firsthand the horrific impact that illegal immigration brings to our door. The first event was when a 20-year-old autistic woman was raped and murdered by a 17-year-old illegal immigrant who was a gang

member from El Salvador, and then a year later, a young mother was killed while out jogging. In the course of the later investigation, it was determined her killer was also an illegal immigrant from El Salvador who was also wanted in connection with a murder of a young woman in that Country.

As Sheriff, the voters of Harford County elected me to provide law enforcement and correctional services in our community. I have been re-elected twice, both by large margins, and with their vote, our citizens have signaled that they approve of my public safety philosophy and the programs and partnerships I have implemented to keep our residents safe. If the 287(g) Program is not right for the voters of Montgomery or Prince Georges County, then they can choose not to enter into the partnership, but it is clearly a tool that has been effective in Harford County.

I am hopefully that this Committee will allow Harford, Cecil and Frederick County to continue these important public safety partnerships and allow us to continue to work cooperatively with all of our federal partners to keep our communities safe. I would strongly urge an unfavorable report of HB 1222.

Respectfully Offered,

Sheriff Jeffrey R. Gahler