

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

Senate Judiciary Proceedings Committee
February 27, 2025

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

My name is Matt Hornbeck, and I am the proud principal of Hampstead Hill Academy, a diverse and high-performing neighborhood school in Baltimore. Today, I stand before you to express my unwavering support for HB 1006, the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act. This critical legislation is not just about policy; it is about people—our children, our families, and the very fabric of our communities.

As an educator, I have seen firsthand the transformative power of education. I have also witnessed the devastating impact of fear and uncertainty on our students and their families. At Hampstead Hill Academy, we serve a vibrant Latino community—hardworking, tax-paying, faith-filled families who are the backbone of our neighborhoods and our local economy. These families are not causing trouble; they are contributing to the success and vitality of our school and our city. Yet, despite their contributions, they live in fear. Fear of being separated from their children. Fear of racial profiling. Fear of being caught up in an immigration raid while simply trying to drop their child off at school or attend a parent-teacher conference.

This fear is not abstract. It is real, and it is affecting our students and their families every single day. Let me share with you the story of a sweet little first-grade student whose name I, unfortunately, cannot say out loud. His parents are so fearful that they sent color copies of his passport and visa directly to both of his classroom teachers. These parents explained that if ICE were to come to school, and God forbid, to the classroom, the teacher could show ICE the papers and say, "Please don't take this child." Enough. Parents and teachers must not feel that pressure at school. No one should feel that pressure.

The stories I hear from our families are heartbreaking. One mother, a DACA recipient, shared with me, "Many think that DACA gives us a status, but it does not. It's a work permit. A legal presence. Dreamers are not protected." She went on to describe the constant fear she lives with, saying, "I'm feeling tired and overwhelmed. I've had three calls from people who have had ICE come to their front door. Knocking and knocking, even when they do not reply."

Another parent shared her anguish. "I've dedicated my life to my children. And I've been involved in the community, and these worries have really affected me. As an immigrant mother, I'm trying to protect my children and the people in my community that I deeply care for. But I hear that knocking on the front door. It might be me or my husband or another person that decides to share their story with me. I'm aware that I cannot help anyone. ICE doesn't care about the mental well-being of a child."

This mother's words echo the sentiments of so many in our community. She continued, "This situation with ICE makes me feel very stressed, very frustrated. I'm a person that gets along with everybody. But because of this system, it makes me feel a certain way against people of lighter color than me. Because I think white people are profiling me, I don't feel like saying hi or good morning anymore. It has changed things in my everyday life to where we would go to mass on Sunday and afterwards go eat breakfast and enjoy family time. We no longer feel safe to go enjoy family time at breakfast, lunch, and dinner out with the family."

The fear and trauma inflicted by the ICE presence in our communities is profound. One parent described how their home no longer feels safe: "Community-wise, because ICE is coming to knock at our home, our home no longer feels safe. However, when our kids are at school or church, at least for that moment, they are safe and thinking about $2 + 2$. PreK is magical at a time like this. Teachers will turn the classroom into the space they need to teach. This is why it's so important to protect our schools."

This is why HB 1006 is so critical. The Protecting Sensitive Locations Act establishes clear guidelines on ICE access to sensitive locations like schools, hospitals, courthouses, and places of worship—places where Maryland residents receive vital services and resources. It ensures that our schools remain safe havens for learning, free from the intrusion of fear and

enforcement actions that disrupt the lives of our students and their families.

Let me be clear: this is not a partisan issue. It is a human issue. Latino parents, White parents, Black parents—all parents want the same thing. We want more and better opportunities for our children. We want them to feel safe, to feel loved, and to feel protected. We want them to succeed. But how can we expect our children to focus on their education when they are worried about whether their parents will be there to pick them up at the end of the day? How can we expect them to thrive when they are burdened by the fear of losing their families?

At Hampstead Hill Academy, we believe that school is the opposite of fear. It is a place of love, kindness, respect, and protection. It is a place where every child, regardless of their background or immigration status, has the right to learn and grow without fear. The Protecting Sensitive Locations Act will help us uphold these values not just at Hampstead Hill, but at schools and sensitive locations across the state.

For the sake of hundreds of thousands of students and their families, I urge you to pass this critical legislation. Let us protect the sanctity of our schools. Let us ensure that every child in Maryland has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive in a safe and supportive environment. Let us show the world that in Maryland, we value our families, we value our communities, and we value the very best of what it means to be an American.

Thank you.