

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

House Judiciary Committee

February 25, 2025

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

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

I am currently a resident physician in combined Internal-Medicine/Pediatrics in Baltimore City. My work during residency has exposed me to the vast breadth of patients from different backgrounds requiring my support as a physician at often the hardest time of their life. I have seen the overwhelming anti-immigrant rhetoric harming my patients in ways I never imagined. My patients in my primary care clinic tell me they are afraid to send their children to school, compromising the education our country promises to the youth I care for. The families of my pediatric patients are afraid to visit their sick children in the hospital. The hospital and primary care setting are no longer spaces of healing for my patients who already face innumerable barriers to care. They now serve as places of fear and constant anxiety. I have seen a significant decrease in the number of patients coming to their appointments and following up on their care. When asked what their hesitation is, I only hear the fear of deportation and the sense of dehumanization they are experiencing in our current social climate. While recently working in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, I had a family that refused to disclose that their primary language is Spanish in fear of being discovered. It prevented me from telling them that their newborn baby was going to be okay.

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 public health and the overall safety of our communities are at risk.

ICE enforcement in the hospital I work in WILL damage the already fragile trust the patients of Baltimore have with their surrounding community. It will have countless impacts on the health and safety of some of our most vulnerable patients, separating families and traumatizing my community. Hospitals deserve to be a place that can provide life-saving and sustaining care without being disrupted by punitive anti-immigrant policies.

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 HB 1006.

Christine Lopez, MD