

## **TESTIMONY ON HBI431 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**

### **State and Local Agencies – Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law – Restrictions on Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)**

Hearing date: February 27, 2025

From: Laura Atwood, Silver Spring, MD

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

My name is Laura Atwood. I am a resident of District 20, and I am submitting this testimony in support of HBI431, the Maryland Data Privacy Act.

At the federal level, these are serious times. I hope that we have all studied history and contemporary society enough to recognize the scapegoating of entire communities—and that we also recognize the almost unthinkable cruelty that individuals and governments are capable of.

Maryland needs to join other states, with full courage and resoluteness, in truly supporting its residents by resisting the federal government's immigration devastation. This includes supporting the Data Privacy Act, which would limit federal access to state and local databases that contain sensitive personal information.

I support this and other immigration bills because of my belief in the deep inherent worth of every individual, and in the inherent interconnectedness of all of us. More specifically, I am a physical therapist, a parent of young adult children, and a community member who has lived internationally and has long been involved with people who've immigrated to this country under a variety of circumstances. People who immigrated enrich my personal life (I've been married to one for 28 years!), my workplace and social circles, and my community.

Every individual who is detained and/or deported is a human being with dignity, deserving of compassion and of justice under constitutional, international, and moral law. And every individual who is detained and/or deported is part of a larger community—often including children and vulnerable adults.

As I was writing this testimony, a friend across the county who works for HUD with housing vouchers texted me: "At work, we know that mixed-status families will lose their full housing vouchers, which will be devastating. I also know HUD can give ICE each family member's immigration information and home address. This can't be changed, but how can these families be warned?" Because HUD is federal, she's correct. But we can, and must, change this possibility with state and local databases.

Recently while my mind was spinning with immigration-related news, I stopped off at my local pupusería because I'd heard that many local restaurants are struggling, plus their pupusas are delicious. A few families were there just enjoying life, as things should be. The father of one clearly tired toddler was trying to leave the table to go to the bathroom. The kid was crying, not wanting the father to go; he scooped her up and hugged and danced with her, turned the now-calm kid over to the mother, and left for the bathroom. All an everyday parenting event. But my spinning mind went to the thought: What if in a different situation, a kid was crying and the parent was unable to return?

How much lifelong trauma are we as a society inflicting—by letting ICE create so much loss, and also realistic fear of this loss?? And how could we not do everything in our power to prevent this?

The Data Privacy Act would make it harder for ICE and other federal agencies to find and misuse personal data to carry out a destructive and hateful agenda. **I therefore respectfully urge this committee to return a (favorable/favorable with amendments/unfavorable) report on HBI431.** Thank you.