

**Testimony on HB 1222 - Favorable with Amendments**

HB 1222 Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)

House Judiciary Committee

February 25, 2025

**Dear Honorable Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Barlett, and Members of the Committee,**

My name is Kony Serrano Portillo, I am a Councilmember for the Town of Edmonston and a member of the Democratic Central Committee in Prince George's County. I came here today to express my support for HB1222, and to talk to you about something that I rarely ever talk about.

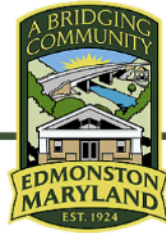
When I was 17, my stepfather, and the only man I've ever called my dad was deported. I vividly remember waking up to my mom screaming on the phone. I remember waking up confused, scared. It was 6 in the morning and he was supposed to be returning from his overnight construction job. He was supposed to be home, knocking at my door, waking me up to get ready. He was supposed to wait on the couch until I was ready and drive me to school. He was supposed to put on our favorite music on that drive. He was supposed to drop me off and tell me to have a good day. He was supposed to be home after school to help me with my math homework.

Instead, the next months felt like a blur. I watched my mother go from action mode to a slow but steady depression that gradually kept her from parenting me. I graduated High School, I went off to college, and moved out of the state, all while my mom only worried about immigration paperwork and saving enough money for us to visit my dad. I lost my dad that day, but for a few years, I lost my mom, too.

I wish I could tell you that having him back with us has fixed my trauma, but the reality is that the state of our nation today has made me shed more tears than I could've anticipated and that I can't watch the news coverage on current deportations because it throws me into a state of anxiety that leaves me with chest pain for days. This bill is not about politics. It's about the next little girl not enduring what many of us have already endured.

I am here today to testify on behalf of thousands of undocumented Marylanders who are afraid to walk into this building. For years, our communities have spoken out





businesses, schools and places of worship subjected to aggressive immigration enforcement actions. Cooperating with 287g will have a chilling impact on heavily Latino communities across Maryland, especially communities that already have serious disparities in how communities of color and immigrant communities are policed.

With that being said, as part of the Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, I urge the removal of Sections 9-309(A), 9-309(B) and 5-104(5). These provisions mandate detention and transfer, which courts and the Maryland Attorney General have flagged as likely unconstitutional, exposing local governments to potential liability. Holding individuals past their scheduled release for civil immigration matters violates individuals' constitutional rights, making it unlawful. In addition to being unlawful, delayed release and transfer result in wasted state resources. Maryland must uphold due process and disentangle immigration enforcement from the criminal justice system.

I hope that my story has left you with some perspective. My father is now a teacher in a public charter school in Washington, DC. My mom continues to do Social Work for adults seeking career readiness and education. My brothers work and go to school. We are an extremely small percentage of families that have been able to be reunited and move forward, but I'll never not have the memories of the day my dad was detained and the days, months and years that came after.

It is why today I join the many voices asking this body to take action. Now is not the time to cooperate with a federal government intent on dismantling the fabric of our country - from rule of law to the unyielding belief that we always have been and always will be a nation of immigrants.

Sincerely,

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