

Testimony on HB1222 - Favorable with Amendments

Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act)

House Judiciary Committee

February 27, 2025

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

My name is Mara Levy and I am pleased to offer a testimony of **favorable with amendments** for HB1222 - Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement (Maryland Values Act). I'm a proud resident of Silver Spring and have lived in Maryland most of my life. I'm an occupational therapist of 20 years and a small business owner. I'm also godmother to a little girl who was born to immigrant parents while living in my home.

As a godmother, I'm frightened for my little girl and her family. I want her to feel safe asking the police for help if she's lost or the victim of a crime. She should be able to call 911 in an emergency. But as it stands, she doesn't have the same police protections I do because of fear that any police contact will take her parents away from her.

At its core, this bill is about upholding Maryland's values—fairness, dignity, and justice for all. The Maryland Values Act affirms that our state should not be in the business of tearing families apart, undermining public trust, or funneling state and local resources into a federal deportation agenda. Instead, Maryland should stand firm in its commitment to community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law - by ending 287(g).

The 287(g) program has a well-documented history of racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detentions. It diverts local law enforcement from their primary duty of protecting public safety, forcing them to act as immigration agents rather than community protectors. This erodes trust, particularly among immigrant communities, making people less likely to report crimes or seek help when needed. Ending 287(g) ensures Maryland's resources are used to foster public safety—not help the federal deportation agenda.

Amendment Recommendation: As part of the Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, I urge the removal of Sections 9-309(A) and (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 legal risk. Holding individuals past their release for civil immigration matters is unlawful, and transfer often results in wrongful detention and wasted state resources. Maryland must uphold due process and disentangle immigration enforcement from the criminal justice system.

I urge the committee to provide a favorable report with amendments on HB 1222.

Mara Levy MSOT, OTR/L, CLT-LANA, SEP