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The Honorable Members of the House Committee

Maryland General Assembly, Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony in Opposition to HB0403 - Correctional Services - Transfers to Federal Authorities - Undocumented Immigrants (Protecting Marylanders from Violent Offenders Act of 2025)

Hearing Date: March 05, 2025

Chairperson and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

My name is Maureen Wambui, and I am a proud Immigrant, Parent, Community advocate and resident of Legislative District 8 in Maryland. I am honored to submit testimony **strongly oppose House Bill 403 (HB0403)**. This bill would mandate the transfer of undocumented immigrants from state or local correctional facilities to federal immigration authorities (ICE), a move that would have devastating consequences for Maryland's immigrant communities.

Reasons for Opposition:

1. Increased Risk of Deportation for Minor Offenses

This bill would subject undocumented individuals to potential deportation, even for minor infractions or instances where charges are later dropped. A simple arrest, without a conviction, could result in an individual being flagged for deportation, leading to unnecessary family separations and community disruptions.

2. Erosion of Trust Between Immigrants and Law Enforcement

When immigrants fear that any interaction with police could lead to deportation, they become less likely to report crimes, serve as witnesses, or cooperate with law enforcement. This makes immigrant communities more vulnerable to crime and exploitation, ultimately making Maryland less safe for everyone.

3. Disproportionate Impact on Black and Brown Immigrants

Research has shown that Black and Latino immigrants are more likely to be stopped, arrested, and detained compared to others. This bill could exacerbate racial disparities within Maryland's criminal justice system, leading to heightened racial profiling and discrimination.

4. Undermining Maryland's Pro-Immigrant Policies

Maryland has historically taken steps to protect immigrant communities through local policies that limit unnecessary cooperation with ICE. These bills would override local discretion, forcing counties to act as an extension of federal immigration enforcement—contradicting the values of fairness and inclusion that Maryland upholds.

5. Economic and Social Harm to Immigrant Families

Undocumented immigrants contribute significantly to Maryland's economy through essential jobs in agriculture, construction, healthcare, and service industries. Deportations triggered by these bills would:

- Separate families, leaving children without parents and households in financial turmoil.
- Cause job losses, leading to increased reliance on social services and economic instability.
- Disrupt communities, affecting businesses, schools, and neighborhoods that rely on immigrant workers and residents.

HB0403 would harm Maryland's immigrant families, weaken trust in law enforcement, and negatively impact our state's economy and public safety. We must stand against policies that promote fear and division.

I urge this committee to reject these harmful bills and instead focus on policies that support, rather than target, our immigrant communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Wambui