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Testimony on HB1431- POSITION: FAVORABLE

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

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is Andrew Miller. I am a resident of District 11B, Chair of the Social Justice Advocacy Committee at Chizuk Amuno Congregation in Stevenson, MD, and Chair of the Synagogue Social Justice Roundtable, which has representatives from synagogue communities in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB1431.

Our sacred texts command us to love the stranger, as we ourselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt, and many of our families came to the United States to escape persecution. For me and for many in my community, protection of immigrants is therefore a sacred obligation. For the last several years our congregation and others have worked in support of Afghan refugee families fleeing the Taliban by providing direct support with the help of refugee relief organizations working in collaboration with the federal government. That collaboration has now been terminated.

Many of us have also worked over the last 8 years, together with immigrant support organizations, to protect the rights of other immigrants who arrived in our country to take refuge from oppressive conditions elsewhere in the world. The new federal administration is now working to undermine the asylum system and to deport millions of undocumented immigrants, and is even trying to override existing protections for immigrants with legal protected status. Immigrants are important contributors to our economy and to our communities here in Maryland, where they make up 17% of the population. They are not criminals. But many are now living in fear that they will be accosted at their places of work, at hospitals, schools, houses of worship, and in courthouses, and that their families could be separated as has already started to happen.

In recent years, the erosion of data privacy protections has led to increased fear and uncertainty within immigrant communities. The Maryland Data Privacy Act **HB1431** takes critical steps to restore trust by ensuring that state and local agencies, as well as law enforcement entities, are prohibited from sharing personal information, facial recognition data, and access to public facilities with federal immigration authorities unless a valid warrant is presented.

I stand with immigrant communities and support the Maryland Data Privacy Act because it will:

1. **Limit Access to Databases and Facilities:** Law enforcement agencies and state or local government units must deny access to sensitive data and facilities to individuals seeking to enforce federal immigration law without a valid court-issued warrant.
2. **Protect Personal Information:** The Act prohibits the disclosure of personal data, photographs, and biometric information, such as facial recognition scans, to federal immigration authorities unless due legal processes are followed.
3. **Provide Accountability and Transparency:** Agencies must maintain records of all access requests and submit annual reports to the Attorney General and the General Assembly to ensure compliance and transparency.
4. **Ensure Enforcement and Penalties:** The Attorney General is empowered to enforce these protections, with civil penalties for violations and disciplinary actions for state employees who fail to comply.

This legislation is crucial not only for protecting the privacy of all Maryland residents but also for fostering trust between immigrant communities and public institutions. By clearly delineating the boundaries of federal immigration enforcement within our state, we promote the values of dignity, safety, and fairness.

I therefore urge the committee to provide a favorable report on HB1431.