

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1006

HB 1006 - Immigration Enforcement - Sensitive Locations - Guidelines and Policies (Protecting Sensitive Locations Act)

House Judiciary Committee

Hearing date: February 27, 2025

From: Alyssa Duda, LCSW- C, Silver Spring, MD

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

I live in District 18 and am pleased to offer **a favorable testimony in strong support of HB 1006.**

I am a proud resident of a diverse neighborhood in Wheaton, MD which includes a number of immigrants and their families. I am a business owner of a mental health private practice and am pleased to offer a favorable testimony in strong support of HB 1006. In my private practice, I provide mental health support to many of whom are impacted by the erosion of secure sensitive community spaces such as in schools, hospitals or churches. I support them with the harmful and negative impact on their well-being, mental health, families and livelihoods that this causes. Additionally, I have a long history of serving asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, documented migrants, their families and their support communities through direct service such as a school social worker, a mental health provider as well as in community mutual aid. I have seen and learned first-hand the detriment that not having safety to access sensitive spaces has on an individual's well-being as well as the terror, fear and inability to engage in a community in a meaningful way.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activities in sensitive locations—such as hospitals, schools, courthouses, and places of worship—to prevent intimidation and ensure access to essential services. However, as of January 20, 2025, the revocation of these protections has left immigrant communities vulnerable to enforcement actions in spaces where they should feel safe.

This shift has already created an environment of fear and uncertainty, discouraging individuals from seeking medical care, pursuing education, accessing legal resources, or engaging with law enforcement. As a result, our communities, public health, and overall safety are at risk.

I have seen first hand when these communities begin to fear attending any activity in a sensitive location; it disrupts essential lifesaving services and creates fear among the people I serve. I work with parents who are afraid to send their children to school or allow their children to receive access to services that are essential in eliminating childhood hunger such as free breakfast or lunch programs. I work with teenagers who have become so depressed about their future and the lack of safety in their world that they have become suicidal and are afraid to turn to the places where they usually seek support. I work with one woman who has stopped accessing essential medical care out of fear of lack of protection in hospital spaces. These families and individuals desperately want to participate in their communities and be allowed to help our community flourish by building businesses and educating their children. The passing of this bill would help ensure that these individuals and families would be allowed to safely access lifesaving medical care, their right to education or their rights to worship as well as support our communities in continuing to grow and thrive.

Everyone should access essential services without fear of detention or separation. Public safety improves when immigrants feel safe reporting crimes and seeking help. Clear enforcement boundaries build trust, strengthening communities and institutions. For these reasons, **I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 1006.**

Sincerely,

Alyssa Duda