
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 810
Public Schools - School Security Personnel - Immigration Investigation and
Enforcement
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 4, 2026

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports SB 810, which will ensure that public school security personnel are not involved in federal immigration enforcement and prohibited from sharing students' or school employees' personal information for immigration purposes, except when legally required. This bill will also require public school security personnel to immediately contact the county superintendent and legal counsel for the local school system if presented with a judicial warrant, subpoena, or legal order for immigration purposes.

SB 810 upholds student privacy precedent for all Maryland students, regardless of immigration status. Federal law and longstanding Supreme Court precedent clearly establish protections for student information. Since the 1982 Supreme Court case *Plyer vs. Doe*, students across all states have the right to receive a free and public education, regardless of immigration status.¹ In light of this ruling, both the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Justice have provided guidance that schools should refrain from asking students and families about their immigration status upon enrollment.² This federal ruling and the subsequent federal guidance makes clear that a student's immigration status is not relevant to school enrollment and should not be collected or maintained by school systems. If immigration status is not relevant to document for educational purposes, there is no justification for its dissemination to external entities. Further, under the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), our schools safeguard students' academic records from being shared without parental consent.³ If we do not disclose academic or behavioral records without consent, it is an inconsistent and inequitable practice to treat a student's immigration status any differently.

Maintaining student and immigrant families' trust in school personnel is foundational to safety and learning. Research and testimony confirm that when immigrant families fear schools, they disengage – not just from attendance but from reporting safety concerns, collaborating with school staff, and participating in school programs. Lower parental involvement is linked with lower academic achievement and

¹ *Plyer v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982). Cornell Legal Information Institute.
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/457/202>

² U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education. (2011, May 6). School enrollment procedures.
<https://www.ed.gov/media/document/colleague-201101pdf-90483.pdf>

³ U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office. (n.d.). What is FERPA?
<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/faq/what-ferpa>

increased absenteeism. One survey suggests that over a quarter of immigrant caregivers surveyed avoid speaking with school officials or teachers and 30% said they will not enroll their child in school programs or early childhood development programs.⁴ Similarly, a study of seven California school districts found that immigration enforcement is associated with declines in academic achievement, attendance, and safety measures.⁵ Students reported lower sense of belonging and reduced perceptions of fairness, with these effects especially pronounced for those who have ever had an Individual Education Plan (IEP) – highlighting the compounded harm for immigrant students in special education.⁶ These findings demonstrate that maintaining trust with immigrant families and students is critical for academic success, engagement, and overall safety.

SB 810 works to increase school participation by reducing fear of immigration enforcement. Maryland schools have lost more than 11,000 students in the 2025-2026 school year with principals directly citing ICE enforcement as a driver of families' decisions to keep children home.⁷ Maryland Board of Education president, Josh Michael, reported a 4.4% drop in graduation rates for Hispanic students and 5.5% drop for multilingual learners in 2025. In Howard County, Hispanic students' graduation rates declined 8% and English learners by 14%.⁸ Statewide and nationally, research confirms that the threat of enforcement suppresses attendance and decreases school participation, with many families already living in fear. By codifying clear limits on school security's personnel role in the immigration enforcement, SB 810 signals to Maryland's families that our legislators are trying to make sure our schools remain a safe space for students to learn and not be criminalized.

For these reasons, **Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 810.**

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

⁴ Brookings Institution. (2025, August). What harsh immigration policies mean for students, families, and schools. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-harsh-immigration-policies-mean-for-students-families-and-schools/>

⁵ Kirksey, J., & Sattin-Bajaj, C. (2021). Immigration arrests and educational impacts. *AERA Open*, 7(1). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/23328584211039787>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Baltimore Banner. (2025, December 16). What's to blame for shrinking Maryland school enrollment? <https://www.thebanner.com/education/k-12-schools/maryland-school-enrollment-shrinking-why-UDZRSMI5FZFC7GOYWCSVUCYDR4/>

⁸ Baltimore Banner. (2026, January 27). Maryland sees drop in Hispanic graduations as immigration raids ramp up. <https://www.thebanner.com/education/k-12-schools/maryland-hispanic-graduation-rate-immigration-HFDHM6PHLJEYDC7LAKAQRZYDUI/>