

Tuesday, February 24, 2026



## Showing Up for Racial Justice

Dear Members of the Finance Committee,,

I am submitting this testimony as a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore, a group of individuals working to mobilize white people in a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. We are also working in collaboration with CASA de Maryland, an immigration advocacy and assistance organization based in Maryland. I am a resident of Baltimore City and District 41. I am testifying **in support** of **SB504, the Data Privacy Act**.

President Trump's cruel, racist, and xenophobic attacks on immigrants has continued in his second administration. It is incumbent upon Maryland to protect the people that he is dedicated to demonizing: our friends, family members, and neighbors, hard-working people who help build our communities. They don't deserve to live in fear.

HB711 is critical in closing dangerous loopholes and limiting ICE's ability to access our state and local agency databases. It would prevent all Maryland state and local government agencies from releasing personal, private data to federal immigration officers without a judicial warrant.

Maryland's past experience with ICE's use of MVA data illustrates the threat from which this bill seeks to protect Marylanders: as one example, a CASA member who was applying for asylum was deported after ICE received his information directly from the MVA database. This constitutes a horrific violation of the trust the state had established with undocumented immigrants by encouraging them get driver's licenses. This trust benefitted everyone by making all of Maryland roads safer.

While the 2021 Driver Privacy Act limited access to MVA data, federal authorities have escalated their tactics by attempting to dig into Medicaid and utility data, among others. HB711 is therefore necessary to fully shut down the pipeline of Marylanders' personal and private data being hijacked by federal agencies seeking to do them harm to our neighbors,

friends, and families, undermine the effectiveness of our institutions, and undermine the safety of our communities.

The federal government's free use of state and local databases to track down immigrants creates a climate of fear in which immigrants and people of color are afraid or unable to seek services they are entitled to cooperate with any kind of authority, because they know that any information they provide will inevitably be weaponized by ICE.

These searches occur without warrants, oversight, or auditing, leaving the door wide open for misuse. In addition, data access has been used with Facial Recognition Technology (FRT), which is less accurate for people of color and significantly likely to result in the misidentification of individuals

This bill specifically closes critical loopholes left by the previous legislation by addressing:

- third party brokers, who can circumvent restrictions by selling our databases to ICE so they do not have to approach the agencies holding the data
- the Nlets program, an interagency data sharing database that could allow agencies at every level of government to access local data.
- geolocation data tracking and license plate readers, as well as reports of ICE accessing utility data to track an individual's location and patterns.

By passing this bill, Maryland joins other states that have taken strong action: California Values Act (2017) and New York Green Light Law (2019) successfully cut off ICE access to state databases without a warrant. Furthermore, this legislation is legally sound, since federal law only restricts states from barring their own entities from sharing information about citizenship or immigration status, which the databases the bill seeks to protect do not contain.

I do not want Maryland to use our resources, including our data, to help President Trump conduct his racist, cruel anti-immigrant campaign. We must stand up for our friends, family, and neighbors by refusing to be complicit in his xenophobia. It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in **support of SB504, the Data Privacy Act.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration

Sincerely,  
Dr. Katherine Blaha  
Baltimore, MD 21209  
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Baltimore