

Testimony for SB505 (FAV)

Submitted by Patricia Fanning, 9438 Macomber Lane, Columbia MD 20145

ptrcfnnng@gmail.com or 443-691-8212 (mobile)

Aviation Health and Safety Act

Senate Finance Committee

Feb. 16, 2026

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Committee:

Since 2021, as a resident of Columbia, MD, I have been a part of an interfaith refugee ministry that helps resettled Afghan refugee families. These are people who worked with the Americans and had to flee when U.S. forces left Afghanistan that year. Some of our families have adult children, husbands, fathers, and other family and friends who are still trapped there, or in other countries. Changing policies here in the U.S. are making our new neighbors frightened for themselves and their families, many of whom remain in dangerous situations.

Our interfaith volunteers are trying our best to reassure them, while transporting them, introducing them to congregants in our houses of worship, or with them in other gatherings to provide services. Now that federal immigration policies have changed, and are changing almost daily, we are worried that our friends who made it here to safety would suffer needless additional fear because they would know ICE is utilizing BWI for deportation purposes.

Because many of our new friends worked with the Americans in Afghanistan, they were threatened, harmed, and/or harrassed by local authorities. We want them to think of the government here as friends, not foes. Knowing that the State of Maryland bans use of BWI for ICE flights will show them the confidence and kindness they deserve.

Immigrants, those with current valid immigration documentation and those without, deserve our protection whether they are from Afghanistan or elsewhere. For many of us, it's a matter of faith. We simply don't turn away those in need. Our faith communities are already praying and helping, but we need our state legislators to help us. Please issue a FAVORABLE report for SB505. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Patricia Fanning, member

Christ Church Interfaith Refugee Ministry