



Regarding Senate Bill 504 – Favorable
Submitted by Birgit Sharp, 2/24/2026

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of CANDLE¹ in support of House Bill 711. This bill is essential for protecting Marylanders' privacy. There are many provisions in the U.S. Constitution that the Supreme Court has interpreted broadly to protect a general right to privacy. Unfortunately for our privacy, the world has gotten more data dependent, governments increasingly provide services through contractors, and information is shared with various third-party entities. And, ICE is using AI to accelerate the integration of data from that vast array of suppliers without sufficient safeguards to ensure the accuracy of the results.² This has made it much more difficult for states to protect the privacy of the residents it serves.

CANDLE applauds the Maryland General Assembly for your work to protect private data. The Driver Privacy Act, the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA), the Maryland Online Data Privacy Act (MODPA), and the Maryland Values Act have all advanced this goal. HB711/SB504 Data Privacy Act continues this important work by closing the following loopholes.

- It widens restrictions on selling consumers' geolocation data by expanding the definition of sensitive information to include the location of mobile phones and vehicles.
- It eliminates backdoor access to immigration-related data by requiring any person—not just federal agents or agencies—to have a judicial warrant before being allowed to receive or inspect personal records or digital images for the purpose of immigration enforcement.
- It deters “fishing” expeditions for immigration-related data by requiring those judicial warrants to clearly identify the record to be accessed.
- It includes directives aimed at ensuring effective implementation of these and other provisions in current law.

This bill is essential for the protection of our immigrant community, allowing people to seek needed, and sometimes critical, services without fear of inviting ICE to their door.

But mass surveillance does not stop with immigrants. Data protection is a fundamental right crucial to personal safety, dignity, and self-determination for everyone. When data is misused and privacy protections erode, everyone is at risk.

Therefore, we urge you to give a favorable report for SB504.

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Far better to light the candle, than to curse the darkness.

1 Candle is the Community Action Network for Democracy, Liberties and Equality, based in Anne Arundel and Calvert counties. Our membership is close to 150 people.

2 The Economist magazine, “How ICE’s new software tools could speed up deportations: The risk of overreach is high.” February 18, 2026 <https://www.economist.com/science-and-technology/2026/02/18/how-ices-new-software-tools-could-speed-up-deportations>

