



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 504

Data Privacy – Consumer Data, Public Records, and Message Switching System (Data Privacy Act)

Senate Finance Committee

February 24, 2026

Manna Food Center strongly supports SB 504 – Data Privacy – Consumer Data, Public Records, and Message Switching System (Data Privacy Act), which aims to enhance the protection of an individual's personal data within the personal records held by government agencies, when the data is to be used for the purpose of immigration enforcement.

Manna Food Center has served residents in Montgomery County, Maryland, since its humble beginnings in a vacant elementary school in 1983, serving just a few hundred recipients with a single pledge of \$3,100, and a donation of 16,000 pounds of food. In 2025, 42 years later, Manna distributed 3.14 million pounds of food, while purchasing over 224,644 pounds of produce from 33 local farms for redistribution to 70 beneficiary organizations. Through our Food for Families distributions at 10 sites, Manna reached 176,156 neighbors. We also supported 7,922 students and their families with programs at 94 school partners.

As these statistics demonstrate, Manna's programs weave through every facet of civic life, creating a robust and dynamic community among all who feel that Montgomery County is their home – no matter how long they have been here or where they came from. However, when members of our community begin to lose trust in state and federal programs or agencies, especially regarding violations of data privacy, our carefully stewarded community networks become strained and precarious.

Despite growing food insecurity and community needs in our region, we and our partner organizations have seen widespread fear of applying to state and federal entitlement programs due to rising uncertainty on the lawful use of their sensitive data, and whether it may be used for immigration enforcement. Fear around data usage for immigration enforcement, or a lack of clarity on regulations, creates ripple effects throughout the population. For example, when the Trump Administration implemented a public charge regulation in 2020 targeting a limited number of lawfully present immigrants applying for green cards, the chilling effect extended far into communities of immigrants with documentation and U.S. citizens. 3 in 10 low-income families



avoided seeking help and care for which they qualified under federal law.

In 2026, we are facing a cascade of similar changes. Maryland state data shows a significant drop in SNAP and Medicaid direct enrollment among children in Maryland schools, which will in turn adversely impact schools hoping to receive funds and reimbursement through the Community Eligibility Provision. There is even hesitation among the community in replying to non-identifying data collection questions such as household size and zip code – critical data required for the county grant funding we receive. Simultaneously, Manna Food Center is now serving more than 10,000 families each month – up from 6,600 just a short while ago – due to growing need after the government shutdown, massive federal job losses, and waning trust in state and federal programs.

This is just a microcosm of what will continue to happen if Maryland allows mistrust and uncertainty around sensitive data held by the government to grow – fewer and fewer Americans availing state and federal benefits that stimulate local economy, with an increasing dependence on non-profit organizations that simply cannot stretch far enough to meet the surging needs. Moreover, sharing geolocation and other sensitive data belonging to individuals of interest to federal immigration enforcement does not only put those individuals at risk. Examples in Minneapolis and around the country show us that it in fact puts everyone — including our partners, staff members, volunteers, bystanders, and others at food distribution sites and events – at risk of fatal harm.

We are truly alarmed by reports that indicate that immigration enforcement's use of Palantir's ImmigrationOS is drawing from thousands of government databases, and we fear that sensitive data held by Maryland's government agencies may already have been harvested for AI-driven immigration enforcement action. We strongly support swift action to pass SB504 in order to protect sensitive and identifying data from immigration enforcement uses, to restore and rebuild public trust in government agencies and programs, and to safeguard basic needs assistance networks at a time of uncertainty and heightened need.

Thank you for your consideration. We ask the committee to make a favorable report on SB 504.

Sincerely,
Manna Food Center



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