

Dr. Nohely Alvarez  
Regarding HB 1223

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Dr. Nohely Alvarez, and I am a Postdoctoral Associate at Georgetown's Georgetown-Howard Medical Humanities and Health Justice Center. For the past several years, I have conducted research for my dissertation and postdoctoral work to examine and understand the lived experiences and well-being of residents in Langley Park, Maryland, including street vendors. My research focuses on immigrant women, who constitute the majority of street vendors and sustain households, neighborhoods, and local commerce through informal work.

In my research and community-engaged work, I have documented how vendors operate not only as sellers but as community anchors who share information, build trust among clientele and residents, and provide culturally affordable food in areas with limited access. However, many women are suffering from traumatic experiences that have stemmed from systemic, social, and/or physical violence, particularly experienced through arduous migrant journeys. This experience, plus their status as migrants, low-income earners, or women in public spaces, puts them in a vulnerable position for harassment, extortion, and extreme stress that can have psychological consequences. These vulnerabilities and threats of citations, immigration enforcement, and displacement have culminated in a constant state of fear and stress for many families, impacting their health, stability, and economic mobility.

At an unprecedented time when immigrant communities are being targeted at all levels, it is important to consider frameworks that shift from punishment to economic inclusion. This bill provides an opportunity for a legal pathway that can reduce excessive penalties and clarify regulations. Previously stigmatized vendors who were seen as a liability could instead be recognized as beneficial contributors to the Prince George's County economy. In addition, implementing clearer regulations that can be more accessible to residents can increase compliance and therefore strengthen trust between residents and local government, rather than creating adversarial policies that undermine public safety.

Supporting vendors is not merely a subsidy but an investment in small-scale entrepreneurship. Street vendors operate within networks that connect local neighborhoods to regional and international supply chains. Their work circulates money within Prince George's County while also supporting extended family networks abroad. These economic linkages stabilize households here and abroad, reducing financial precarity and strengthening community resilience. Based on years of research and community engagement with vendors, I strongly support this bill as a meaningful step toward economic inclusion and public well-being.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alvarez