

SB 245 - Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition

Thursday, January 22, 2026
Judicial Proceedings Committee

POSITION: SUPPORT

SUBMITTED BY: James Kitchin, PhD

Good afternoon Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee,

My name is James Kitchin, and I am submitting this testimony in **strong support** of Senate Bill 245, which would prohibit the State, local governments, and county sheriffs from entering into immigration enforcement agreements with the federal government.

Why This Bill Matters

287(g) agreements deputize local law enforcement to carry out federal immigration functions. While proponents argue these programs enhance public safety, the academic research tells a very different story. The broad body of evidence from academic research demonstrate that 287(g) programs:

1. **Increase racial profiling by local police.** Studies consistently show that jurisdictions with 287(g) agreements experience higher rates of pretextual stops targeting Black and Brown communities.
2. **Increase incarceration rates in communities of color.** These programs disproportionately funnel residents into the deportation pipeline, separating families and destabilizing communities. This is true even when the detained residents are law abiding citizens with no criminal record.
3. **Decrease trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement.** When residents fear that any interaction with police could lead to deportation, they stop reporting crimes, cooperating with investigations, and seeking emergency services. This makes everyone less safe.
4. **Decrease economic output. Immigrant communities are pillars of local economies.** When families are torn apart and workers are removed, businesses close and overall economic output declines.
5. **Waste local resources.** Local governments that participate in these programs spend local revenue performing a function of the federal government. This is a poor use of resources.

SB0245, by preventing these cooperative agreements with ICE, will increase trust, increase racial justice, make all Maryland residents safer, improve our economy, and make local government more efficient.

What We Learned in Anne Arundel County

I speak not only as a researcher of local government immigration policies but as a practitioner as well. I have worked for the Pittman Administration in Anne Arundel County for the past seven years

(though, to be clear, I am submitting this testimony as a private resident). Anne Arundel has the somewhat unique experience of having adopted a 287(g) agreement in 2017, under a previous administration, and then made the decision to end it a year later, under the Pittman Administration. I contributed substantially to the research and analysis that justified ending the program, drawing on both academic literature and what we heard directly from community members. The evidence was clear: the program was harming our residents without making anyone safer.

A much better way to increase public safety is to establish trust between all communities and law enforcement and to make government services more accessible.

Why Maryland Should Act Now

In the current federal climate, the protection this bill provides is more urgent than ever. Local governments are under pressure to collaborate with federal immigration enforcement, and the consequences fall hardest on the most vulnerable members of our communities. Maryland should make clear that we will not use state or local resources to detain, deport, or separate immigrant families.

I have studied this issue academically and have helped implement the alternative in practice. Both the research and the experience in Anne Arundel County confirms it: communities are stronger, safer, and more prosperous when we reject 287(g) programs and instead invest in building trust with all residents.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 245.

Thank you for your consideration.

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