

Senate Bill 245
Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition
Judicial Proceedings Committee
1/20/2026
Favorable

Catholic Charities supports Senate Bill 245, which prohibits the State, a unit of local government, a county sheriff, or any agency, officer, employee, or agent of the State or a unit of local government from entering into an immigration enforcement agreement with the federal government and requires the termination of any existing immigration enforcement agreement on or before July 1, 2026.

For more than a century, Catholic Charities has provided care and services that improve the lives of Marylanders in need. We accompany Marylanders as they age with dignity; support their pursuit of employment and career advancement; help individuals heal from trauma and addiction; promote independence and educational success; and welcome immigrant neighbors into communities across the state.

As the largest private provider of human services in Maryland, Catholic Charities is deeply committed to supporting immigrant communities through our Esperanza Center and other programs, including Head Start and meal programs that serve those in need. Since 1963, the Esperanza Center has served as a vital resource for immigrants, offering comprehensive services through a dedicated team of staff and volunteers.

As an organization that works closely with thousands of immigrants each year, we understand the importance of prohibiting the State and units of local government from entering into immigration enforcement agreements for the following reasons:

- 287(g) agreements, and similar arrangements that authorize local law enforcement to perform the duties of federal immigration officers, are harmful to communities and neighborhoods by creating fear and distrust of local law enforcement. They do not enhance public safety as outlined below, and they are associated with incidents of racial profiling that have only intensified in the current federal anti-immigrant policy actions.
- The training provided under these agreements is inadequate and has led to documented civil rights violations, as well as injuries and death of citizens and immigrants alike.
- Studies show that immigrants are significantly less likely to report crimes they witness or crimes committed against them in jurisdictions with 287(g) agreements, undermining public safety for everyone.
- These agreements blur enforcement roles and divert state and local officers from their primary responsibilities, while federal immigration authorities should carry out federal immigration enforcement independently.
- Beyond 287(g) agreements, recent federal enforcement practices have expanded ICE operations into spaces that were previously considered protected, including churches, schools, and courthouses. ICE presence in courthouses, in particular, discourages individuals from appearing in court due to fear of detention or violence, interfering with the effective administration of justice at the state level.

Senate Bill 245 directly addresses these concerns by establishing clear protections for immigrant communities and citizens alike and reaffirming the appropriate boundaries between state and federal responsibilities. This protection is essential to maintaining trust between immigrant residents and State and local government institutions. For these reasons, **Catholic Charities of Baltimore respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 245.**

Submitted By: Madelin Martinez

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