

To: Maryland General Assembly
From: Ongisa Ichile-Mckenzie, Director, Southern Marylanders for Racial Equality
Re: Senate Bill 245

January 20, 2026

Dear Senators:

As Director of Southern Marylanders for Racial Equality, representing families and residents across Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties. I submit this testimony in urgent and personal support of Senate Bill 245, a bill that would prohibit Maryland law enforcement from entering into or renewing agreements under the federal 287(g) program with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Senate Bill 245 is not abstract policy — it is a public safety imperative grounded in the real threat that comes when local police become entangled with federal immigration enforcement.

Just weeks ago, a federal ICE agent fatally shot 37-year-old Renée Good, a U.S. citizen, during an enforcement operation in Minneapolis. Investigations and video show that the ICE agent, whose face and identification were not visible to bystanders, discharged his weapon at close range during the encounter. This tragic death — and ongoing national controversy — underscores the dangers of enforcement operations conducted without clear accountability or community trust.

In Southern Maryland, residents already live in fear of aggressive immigration enforcement practices that resemble illegal detentions and home intrusions by federal agents in other states. People in our region have shared personal accounts of ICE raids that resemble “home invasions,” where agents carry out arrests without transparent identification, escalating fear across immigrant and mixed-status families.

Under the 287(g) program, local police could be deputized to act as federal immigration officers, including assisting with detentions that may lead to federal enforcement actions like those seen in Minneapolis and elsewhere. This not only jeopardizes civil liberties and due process but also jeopardizes public safety. When residents fear that ordinary interactions with police — reporting a shooting, seeking help after a break-in, or cooperating with an investigation — might trigger immigration scrutiny or detainment, the already thin trust collapses.

Senate Bill 245 reaffirms that local public safety and community policing should not be repurposed into immigration enforcement. Removing 287(g) agreements protects Maryland families by keeping local police focused on preventing violent crime, responding to emergencies, and building trust — rather than participating in federal actions that have led to deaths, fear, and mistrust.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 245.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'O' followed by a series of loops and a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Ongisa Ichile-Mckenzie
Director, Southern Marylanders for Racial Equality