



SB 988 – JUDICIAL FACILITIES – STOPS, DETENTIONS, AND ARRESTS – LIMITATIONS

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, I am proud to express my strong support for **SB 988 – Judicial Facilities – Stops, Detentions, and Arrests – Limitations**.

My name is Tina Horn and I am honored to serve as the chief external affairs officer with the Luminus Network, Inc. Luminus is a 45-year-old nonprofit legal immigration services firm headquartered in Howard County but serving immigrants across central Maryland. Across the United States, we are seeing an increase in the use of courthouse appearances as opportunities for civil immigration enforcement actions, creating a chilling effect and widespread fear of utilizing the courthouses for their intended purpose. Unfortunately, Maryland is not immune to this trend. As a result, Marylanders, including both citizens and immigrants, have been reported to opt out of filing cases, even those that affected their personal safety, such as protective orders. They also refused to serve as witnesses and had judgments issued against them because they were afraid to go to court or did not perceive it to be a safe or neutral space. The chilling effect of courthouse arrests in Maryland is real.

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) is a special protection for minor children who were abused, abandoned, or neglected by one or both parents prior to the age of 18. This process begins with a custody petition in state circuit court.

U Visas are a special immigration visa for victims of certain crimes who cooperate with law enforcement in investigating or prosecuting those crimes. The first step in the U Visa process is obtaining certification from a law enforcement or prosecutorial agency of an individual's cooperation in the prosecution or investigation of a crime. Individual crime victims may testify in criminal proceedings and need to safely access the courts to do so. U Visas are good public policy.

Both SIJS and U Visas are pathways to legal permanent residency (LPR or “green cards”) for approved recipients and require safe and unfettered access to Maryland’s courts. If our Maryland resident clients are justifiably afraid to walk into Maryland’s courts to seek the relief and protections that we are all entitled to, we are fostering unequal systems of access to the justice system.

SB988 aims to preserve the ability of Maryland’s courts to function safely, fairly, and as intended by acting as a courthouse access and court integrity bill. This legislation would establish clear rules governing arrests for certain civil offenses within the physical grounds of judicial facilities, to protect access to justice and the orderly administration of Maryland’s courts.

Last year, the General Assembly took an important step by passing SB 828 to designate courthouses as sensitive locations. Thank you for doing that. However, data from 2025 shows that ICE still conducted 23 arrests in Maryland district and circuit courthouses. These continued enforcement actions demonstrate that additional protections are needed to ensure that individuals



can attend court proceedings without fear of civil arrest. SB 988 builds on the progress made last year by more clearly limiting arrests for civil offenses in and around judicial facilities.

SB 988 will strengthen due process, protect public safety, and reinforce confidence in Maryland's courts. Every person who is required to appear in court should be able to do so without fear that participation itself will expose them to adverse immigration action like detention. That principle is essential to fairness, constitutional governance, and the rule of law. Therefore, I respectfully urge a favorable report from this committee on SB 988 – Judicial Facilities – Stops, Detentions, and Arrests – Limitations.