

Testimony on Senate Bill – Favorable
SB 245 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

January 22, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

I am Rev. Charlene Belsom Zellmer and I am a **resident of D16 in Bethesda, Maryland**. I am writing in support of **SB 245 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition**.

In my many years of serving the community and Nation as an immigrant advocate, I have come to learn and experience the distrust engendered by 287g agreements, including in our State. Fear and intimidation are rampant amongst our neighbors, friends, and family members who feel threatened with government enforcement in this aggressive environment of profiling and illegal abductions and who fear being separated from their loved ones. We have been called to provide pastoral care, nutrition and healthcare support, and presence with families who, in many cases, are seeking to regularize their immigration status in this complicated system filled with roadblocks. In the faith community, we encourage radical hospitality for the world's traditions include welcoming the stranger across scriptures.

I support **SB 245** because immigration enforcement agreements like 287(g) create fear in immigrant communities and undermine public safety for everyone. When people fear contact with law enforcement, they are less likely to report crimes, seek help, or cooperate as witnesses—even when they are victims.

Programs like 287(g) have been associated with racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detention. They divert local resources away from protecting communities and instead entangle local agencies in federal deportation efforts that separate families and destabilize neighborhoods.

With firm trust amongst all institutions for all residents of our community, all will feel safer and welcomed. Those currently profiled would, instead, be able to report crime in the community thus protecting themselves, their families, and all of us. This climate of mutual respect, dignity, and love is what we try to achieve in a peaceful world. Eliminating 287g agreements will bring us closer together.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a **favorable report** on **SB 245**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Rev. Charlene Belsom Zellmer, MDiv
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