
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 791
Correctional Services and Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement - Prohibitions
(Community Trust Act)
Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 25, 2026

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports SB 791, which will prohibit state and local correctional facilities and law enforcement agencies from proactively facilitating the transfer of an individual to federal immigration authorities without a valid judicial warrant. This bill will draw a clear line between Maryland law enforcement and federal immigration enforcement. The delineation between local and federal roles will preserve trust between immigrant communities and local law enforcement and safeguard due process for all Marylanders. Maryland's resources, tax dollars, personnel, and facilities should serve and support Marylanders, not federal ICE operations.

At its core, SB 791 is about upholding Maryland's values - fairness, dignity, and justice - for all. Right now, local jails and police across nearly every Maryland county voluntarily hold and transfer individuals to ICE without a judicial warrant. Many of these individuals have not been convicted of any crime. This informal collaboration turns local agencies into extensions of ICE's deportation machine, undermines the presumption of innocence, and erodes the community trust that keeps all Marylanders safe. This bill affirms that our state should not be in the business of tearing apart families, undermining public trust, and diverting state and local resources into federal immigration enforcement. Maryland should remain focused on community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law by responsibly limiting collaboration with federal immigration enforcement agencies.

Members of Social Work Advocates for Social Change support immigrants in a direct service capacity and witness the growing fears of ICE enforcement across the state. Individuals report fear of picking their children up from school, filling pharmacy prescriptions, and keeping in-person doctor's appointments. Research confirms our experiences working in communities: when immigrant communities view local law enforcement and federal immigration enforcement as entangled, they are less likely to report crimes or seek help.¹ Fear of family separation and unlawful detainment further inhibits these residents from engaging with public services, including public education and health care for critical needs. As discussed during the December 2025 Spending Affordability Committee meeting, student enrollment in Maryland public schools - particularly for English language learners - has fallen below state projections, which DLS attributes to federal immigration actions.²

Collaboration between local correctional facilities and law enforcement agencies with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contributes to escalating fears surrounding immigration enforcement in Maryland. According to data compiled by the Deportation Data Project, ICE arrests in Maryland nearly tripled between 2024 and 2025, with 3,308 arrests occurring between January 1, 2025 and October 15, 2025 - compared to 1,353 arrests in 2024.³ Of the Marylanders arrested by ICE between January 20 and October 15, 2025, nearly one-third (29%) were transferred from local jails and other lock-ups.⁴ These arrests and jail transfers mean more families separated and community members removed from Maryland neighborhoods, in many cases before ever being convicted of a crime.

Disentangling ICE from Maryland agencies protects and respects the dignity of Maryland's immigrant communities. Jail transfers bypass legal due process procedures required by the U.S. Constitution. Additionally, detainees are regularly required to be held longer in Maryland jails until ICE can transport them to a detention facility. This puts an unnecessary burden on the local jail facilities and personnel that Maryland taxpayers should not be expected to absorb. This bill requires a judicial warrant before local jurisdictions hold detainees for ICE. It also stops local officers from proactively contacting ICE to investigate and transfer those in local custody. SB 791 does not prevent the federal agencies from carrying out their duties; it ensures that Maryland is not doing ICE's job for them.

For these reasons, **Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 791.**

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

¹ Baumer, E. P., & Xie, M. (2023). Federal-Local Partnerships on Immigration Law Enforcement: Are the Policies Effective in Reducing Violent Victimization?. *Criminology & public policy*, 22(3), 417–455. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12619>

² Richman, T. (Dec 15, 2025). Maryland public school enrollment is shrinking, and leaders are scratching their heads. *Baltimore Banner*. <https://www.thebanner.com/education/k-12-schools/maryland-school-enrollment-shrinking-why-UDZRSMI5FZFC7GOYWCSVUCYDR4/>

³ Government data provided by ICE in response to a FOIA request, processed by the Deportation Data Project. Accessed January 19, 2026. Retrieved from <https://deportationdata.org/data/processed/ice.html>

⁴ Based on ICE data retrieved through FOIA and analyzed by Prison Policy Initiative: "New ICE arrest data show the power of state and local governments to curtail mass deportations." <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2025/12/11/ice-jails-update/>