

Bill: SB0245

Position: Favorable

Committee: Judicial Proceedings Committee

January 19, 2026

Favorable Testimony for SB0245 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition

Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Coen Doss, and I am a Master of Social Work student at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, a member of Maryland's LGBTQIA+ community, and a resident of Legislative District 32. I am honored to submit testimony **strongly supporting SB0245**.

SB0245 is a timely, critical advancement in state-level protections for immigrants, and has the potential for even greater impact on LGBTQIA+ immigrants in particular. This legislation, which seeks to limit state and local cooperation with federal immigration enforcement under most circumstances, would provide a significant safeguard for some of Maryland's most vulnerable residents. For LGBTQIA+ immigrants, passage of this bill would mean enhanced safety, greater access to essential services, and a better chance to live with dignity and without fear.

LGBTQIA+ immigrants often face multiple layers of persecution and risk. Many flee countries where their sexual orientation or gender identity is criminalized or met with violence, and then once they arrive in the United States, they face a daunting immigration system and the constant threat of detention or deportation. This threat is amplified by interactions with local law enforcement, where minor offenses can escalate into immigration consequences. SB0245 will effectively disentangle basic public safety functions from immigration enforcement, ensuring that LGBTQIA+ immigrants can report crimes, seek help from police, and access community services without fear that this contact will lead to immigration detention. This is especially crucial for transgender immigrants, who are disproportionately targeted for violence and who require protection, not prosecution.

Furthermore, this bill will directly support public health and community well-being. Fear of deportation prevents many LGBTQIA+ immigrants from seeking essential medical care and mental health services. However, trust in institutions increases when local agencies cannot be enlisted as proxies for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Hospitals, clinics, and social service providers can become safe havens rather than potential traps. This allows for earlier intervention, better health outcomes, and a healthier community overall.

Additionally, SB0245 will foster economic stability. LGBTQIA+ immigrants who live without the pervasive fear of being separated from family, both biological and chosen, can pursue education, maintain employment, and contribute more fully to Maryland's economy and civic life. The constant stress of potential deportation undermines economic mobility and mental

health. This legislation provides a layer of security that enables individuals to build livelihoods and strengthen their communities.

All in all, SB0245 recognizes that the state's role is to protect all its residents, not to facilitate a federal enforcement regime that disproportionately terrorizes and tears apart marginalized families. For LGBTQIA+ immigrants, who face discrimination based on both their identity and their immigration status, this bill is a lifeline. It affirms that in Maryland, their safety and dignity are prioritized, allowing them to live openly and authentically as indispensable members of our shared society.

For all the reasons stated above, **I urge a favorable report of SB0245.**

Thank you for your consideration,

Coen Doss (he/they)

Laurel, MD

Legislative District 32