

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,

My name is Christian Benford, and I am a resident of Frederick, Maryland. I am writing in support of **SB 245 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition**.

I am a Latino man and was raised by a Salvadoran tradesman and survivor of war. He was an incredibly hard-working man. Growing up, I was incredibly aware of how uncomfortable him and I felt when he interacted with people in public. Cashiers speaking to me instead of him because they assumed he didn't speak English. Someone interrogating his place of origin, because he'd always say New Jersey. Or law enforcement profiling him to ask about his citizenship status.

When I was 8 years old, I got to watch him receive his citizenship. This didn't stop any of those interactions. Those based in fear and the negative perception of immigrants in this country. It is why I have committed myself to supporting our immigrant communities through mutual aid efforts, "know your rights" canvassing, and, of course, and speaking against methods of law enforcement that indiscriminately target individuals, such as the discriminatory 287(g) program.

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.

The National Immigrant Justice Center says Latinos are 44% less likely to report victimized crimes, afraid their status will be questioned, making everyone less safe. But what does our Sheriff Chuck Jenkins, an early adopter of the program, say about it? That it's the reason Frederick County has a lower crime rate compared to neighboring counties.

The National Incident-Based Reporting System data for 2024 shows neighboring Carroll County had a 22% lower crime rate per 100,000 people than Frederick County and had no 287(g) program then. But the 287(g) program is not bad because it's not an effective crime reducer, it is because of the association of immigration with crime when countless studies show it's political scapegoating. Advocates for retaining the program show their preoccupation with unjustly targeting and criminalizing immigrants instead of tackling real inequities and community issues.

In Maryland, a majority of those arrested had no criminal convictions and no criminal charge. The only violation was unauthorized presence, a civil misdemeanor. 287(g) is effective at targeting those posing no public safety threat. Nationally in 2024, according to the TRAC Data Project, three-quarters of those deported through 287(g) had no criminal convictions. In Maryland, for every individual deported through 287(g) with a serious level 1 conviction, 115 individuals had no criminal conviction at all.

If we are to be a state that delivers justice to all of neighbors, we must not associate ourselves with programs like 287(g) that encourage racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detention or utilize local law enforcement to help fuel Donald Trump's violent mass deportation program.

While in Frederick our 287(g) program is jail-based, this does not stop law enforcement from targeting individuals with erroneous charges, detaining them, and holding them at our detention center for ICE. If we are to ban 287(g) agreements in Maryland completely, we can help assure our neighbors that Maryland will not participate in a program that targets them for speaking the wrong language at the wrong time or existing while black or brown.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.