

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0245

Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Giuliana Valencia-Banks, and I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 0245. I'm a proud resident of Baltimore City that has chosen this state as my home for the last 17 years.

I offer this testimony not only as a professional working with immigrant communities across Maryland, but also from the lived experience of immigrants and families who navigate daily life under the fear and uncertainty created by entanglement between local law enforcement and federal immigration enforcement.

SB 0245 is a critical step toward restoring trust between immigrant communities and the public institutions meant to serve and protect them.

For many immigrants, interactions with local government — whether with police, county agencies, or courts — are essential to daily life. Parents must feel safe driving their children to school. Workers must feel safe reporting wage theft. Survivors of domestic violence must feel safe calling 911. When local law enforcement enters into immigration enforcement agreements, that safety disappears.

These agreements turn trusted public servants into extensions of federal immigration enforcement. The result is not increased public safety, but increased fear. Community members avoid reporting crimes, serving as witnesses, or seeking help. This undermines the very foundation of effective policing and community-based public safety.

SB 0245 recognizes an important truth: civil immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility, not a state or local one. Local governments are best positioned to focus on what they do best — protecting public safety, responding to emergencies, and serving residents — not enforcing complex federal immigration law.

From the immigrant perspective, this bill sends a powerful message:

That Maryland values fairness.

That Maryland understands the difference between public safety and immigration enforcement.

That Maryland believes families deserve dignity, stability, and trust in their government.

The requirement to terminate existing agreements by July 1, 2026, provides a responsible and orderly transition, while making clear that Maryland will no longer participate in policies that erode community trust.

Immigrants are essential to Maryland's economy, culture, and civic life. We are workers, parents, business owners, caregivers, students, and neighbors. Policies that isolate us or push us into the shadows do not make our communities safer — they make them weaker.

SB 0245 strengthens public safety by strengthening trust. It protects civil rights, preserves local resources, and ensures that Maryland remains a state where all residents can engage with government without fear.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 0245.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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