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ISRAEL MELENDEZ  
HELENE O'BRIEN  
ROCHELLE PALACHE  
MICHAEL PISTONE  
SAM WILLIAMSON

**Capital Area District**

Washington 202.387.3211  
Baltimore 410.244.6299  
Virginia 202.387.3211

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Stamford 203.6749965

**Mid-Atlantic District 1201**

215.226.3600  
215.923.5488  
302.295.4814

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305.672.7071

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914.328.3492

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502.368.9122

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617.523.6150

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973.824.3225

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District**

412.471.0690

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**Testimony of Jaime Contreras, 32BJ SEIU Executive Vice President  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Senate Bill No. 245 - Favorable  
January 22, 2026**

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

32BJ SEIU offers favorable testimony in support of **SB 245 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition**.

32BJ SEIU is proud to stand in solidarity with the over one million immigrant workers residing in Maryland who live in constant fear of detention and deportation. As an organization that is dedicated to advancing and protecting worker rights, we strongly support and urge the passage of **SB 245**.

32BJ is the largest building service union in the country, representing over 185,000 members up and down the East Coast and over 3,700 members across Maryland. Our members are primarily immigrants and people of color, and make up the workforce of essential cleaners, door-people, airport workers, and other building service workers who keep our homes, workplaces, schools, and transportation hubs up and running.

With our dedicated members, we fight to build a just society where immigrants can live free of fear and are treated with dignity and respect. Unfortunately, communities nationwide are facing an unprecedented attack by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Immigration arrests have tripled across the country, and Maryland has been no exception to this trend.<sup>i</sup> The current administration's immigration dragnet has left few communities unscathed. Our union family is no exception: multiple 32BJ members have been subjected to unjust detention by ICE.

At its core, **SB 245** is about upholding Maryland's values - fairness, dignity, and justice for all. This bill affirms that our state should not be in the business of tearing families apart, undermining public trust, or diverting state and local resources into federal immigration enforcement. Instead, Maryland should remain focused on community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law by prohibiting immigration enforcement agreements such as 287(g).

Over the past year, increasingly reckless federal immigration policy has sown fear and distrust across our union's membership and damaged the broader social fabric that holds our state together. Although President Trump claimed that ICE would be targeting "dangerous criminals,"<sup>ii</sup> seventy three percent of those detained since October of last year had no criminal conviction and only five

**Capital Area District**

Jaime Contreras, Capital Area District Director

**Washington, DC**

1025 Vermont Ave, NW, 7th Floor  
Washington DC 20005  
202.387.3211

**Baltimore**

20 S. Charles St. Suite 901  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
410.244.6299

**Virginia**

8618 Westwood Center Dr. Ste 308  
Vienna, VA 22182  
202.387.3211



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percent had been convicted of a violent crime.<sup>iii</sup> Due to this indiscriminate persecution, workers across Maryland are increasingly hesitant to show up for their jobs, employers are seeing disruption and uncertainty in their workplaces, and violations of labor and wage laws are going unaddressed because workers fear that speaking up could put themselves or their families at risk.

The 287(g) program has a documented history of racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detention. It diverts local law enforcement away from their primary role of protecting public safety and erodes trust between law enforcement and immigrant communities. When trust is broken, community safety suffers.

This climate of fear undermines basic workplace accountability. Retaliation—or the fear of it—is the primary reason workers do not report abuse. When immigration enforcement activity escalates, especially where it intersects with state or local law enforcement, unethical employers are effectively given cover to exploit vulnerable workers.<sup>iv</sup> That exploitation does not stop with immigrant workers; it threatens safety and standards across entire sectors. Clear protections that separate immigration enforcement from workers' interactions with government are essential to ensuring that all workers can assert their rights without fear.

For these reasons, 32BJ SEIU urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a **favorable report on SB 245**.

<sup>i</sup> Kate Amara & Khiree Stewart, *'It scares me': Marylanders protesting as data shows ICE arrests nearly tripled in 2025*, WBAL-TV 11 Baltimore, Jan 12, 2026.

<https://www.wbaltv.com/article/marylanders-protesting-data-ice-arrests-nearly-tripled-2025/69980610>

<sup>ii</sup> Melissa Goldin, *Trump says he wants to deport 'the worst of the worst.' Government data tells another story*, Associated Press, July 12, 2025. <https://apnews.com/article/fact-check-trump-immigration-crime-ice-criminal-dangerous-violent-99557d9d68642004193a9f4b7668162e>

<sup>iii</sup> David Bier, *5% of People Detained By ICE Have Violent Convictions, 73% No Convictions*, CATO Institute, November 24, 2025. <https://www.cato.org/blog/5-ice-detainees-have-violent-convictions-73-no-convictions>

<sup>iv</sup> Daniel Costa, *Immigration enforcement and the workplace*, Economic Policy Institute, April 15, 2025. <https://www.epi.org/publication/immigration-enforcement-and-the-workplace/>

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