



## **Written Testimony – Favorable**

### **SB0245 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition**

My name is Ethan Wechtaluk. I am a Maryland resident, a father, and a candidate for Congress in Maryland's 6th District. I submit this testimony in strong support of SB0245, informed by a principled belief that effective governance and public safety are best served when their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.

SB0245 confronts a structural failure in immigration enforcement that distorts the mission of law enforcement in Maryland by collapsing distinct federal and local responsibilities into an unworkable hybrid. In doing so, these agreements divert already scarce local resources and undermine the foundational conditions of public safety that are paramount to effective law enforcement at the local level: trust, cooperation, and institutional legitimacy.

When residents reasonably believe that contact with local law enforcement may expose them to federal immigration enforcement, the consequences are not theoretical but predictable and well-documented. Victims are less likely to report crimes, witnesses disengage from investigations, and vulnerable populations retreat from the very institutions meant to protect them. The result is not crime prevention, but a breakdown in trust that allows violence, exploitation, and repeat offenses to go unchecked. Far from enhancing public safety, this dynamic actively undermines it.

Local law enforcement is most effective when its role is highly accountable and clearly defined, with a narrow focus that is aligned with its core competencies. Programs such as 287(g) agreements force officers to operate outside that scope, entangling routine policing with complex federal immigration determinations for which local departments are neither

designed nor resourced. SB0245 restores clarity of purpose by reestablishing a clean and necessary division of responsibility: immigration enforcement is a federal function, and Maryland's state and local law enforcement agencies exist to protect public safety for all residents.

The bill also reflects a broader principle of sound governance. Maryland's immigrant communities are deeply integrated into the state's social and economic fabric as workers, parents, caregivers, entrepreneurs, and taxpayers. Policies that treat entire populations as inherently suspect do not produce security, they generate fear-driven behaviors. SB0245 rejects that model and affirms an evidence-based approach to public safety.

Maryland has both the authority and the obligation to ensure that its institutions operate in ways that are rational, humane, and aligned with their intended purpose. SB0245 advances that responsibility by strengthening public safety, preserving institutional integrity, and reinforcing trust between communities and the systems meant to serve them. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable vote.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ethan Wechtaluk', with a stylized, cursive script.

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