

Testimony Supporting SB0791/HB1575
Correctional Services and Public Safety – Immigrant Enforcement - Prohibitions

Respectfully Submitted by
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My name is Rabbi Susan Grossman. While I am a Commissioner on the Governor's Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs, I am submitting this written testimony as a private citizen and interfaith leader in support of SB 0791/HB1575.

I was raised as the daughter of a New York City fireman and was always taught I should seek out a police officer if I ever needed assistance. That such a trust is, unfortunately, not true for so many young people is a tragedy with serious repercussions for our society. Our law enforcement officers are vested with a sacred trust. They are responsible for protecting public safety in our communities with honesty, integrity, and compassion, serving as aspirational models of justice and safety. Developing and retaining public and local community trust is essential to their effectiveness. This is part of the reasoning behind recent state legislation signed into law by Governor Moore in February, which prohibits state and local law enforcement from deputizing officers for federal civil immigration enforcement activities. The intent was clear: Maryland is a State proud of its immigrant populations, who contribute to our State's vibrancy and success, and is committed to ensuring the safety of its population, in all its diversity.

The immigrant enforcement prohibitions delineated in SB 0791/HB1575 will help better ensure that these values are consistently actualized by clarifying that agents of correctional facilities and law enforcement, including local sheriffs, are also prohibited from cooperating with federal civil immigration enforcement. Such legislation balances the need for public safety, in terms of protecting the public from perpetrators of violent crime, and the moral imperative to protect Maryland's tapestry of residents from discrimination because of the color of their skin or national origin.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the founding of our great nation, we can pause to reflect on the words that inspired our Founding Fathers when they signed the Declaration of Independence: that all are *endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights that, among these, are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*. We have made great strides over the last 250 years to broaden the range of races and genders included in this promise. We are a state that is proud of the contributions immigrants have made to our success and the diverse fabric of our society. As a State, we have the moral obligation to ensure that peace-loving individuals who have come to our shores inspired by this promise of freedom and safety for themselves and their children and desiring to be productive members of Maryland society, can do so without fear.

I urge a favorable report and passage of these bills.