



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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April 1, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of Senate Bill 791: Correctional Services and Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement – Prohibitions (Community Trust Act)

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

I write to express my strong support for Senate Bill 791, the Community Trust Act. Howard County is proud to be a community where diversity is embraced and where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. This legislation reflects a thoughtful and measured approach to public safety that recognizes the importance of maintaining trust between local government and the communities we serve.

In 2020, the Howard County Council passed the Liberty Act with a supermajority and the law was reaffirmed by 64% of County voters on referendum in 2022. The law prohibits the use of County resources for immigration enforcement unless it is required by federal or state law, or an international treaty. The Liberty Act also explicitly prohibits discrimination based on citizenship, nationality, or immigration status. County employees are also barred from inquiring about a resident's immigration status, restricts the sharing of such information, and ensures that all residents, regardless of background, can access public services without fear or hesitation.

The Liberty Act was grounded in a simple but powerful principle: when residents trust their local government, they are more likely to report crimes, seek medical care, engage with schools, and participate in civic life. That trust is essential to effective governance and to the safety and well-being of our entire community.

SB791 builds upon this foundation at the state level. By prohibiting certain actions related to immigration enforcement by correctional personnel and law enforcement, such as detaining individuals solely on the basis of civil immigration matters or sharing information absent a judicial warrant. SB791 reinforces the appropriate role of local institutions.

Importantly, this legislation does not interfere with legitimate criminal law enforcement. Rather, it ensures that local resources are focused on addressing crime and protecting public safety, while civil immigration enforcement remains a federal responsibility. This distinction is critical. When local law enforcement is perceived as an extension of federal immigration authorities, it can create fear that drives vulnerable populations into the shadows, making communities less safe.



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Moreover, policies like the Community Trust Act help ensure that public servants are not placed in untenable positions. By clearly defining the limits of involvement in civil immigration enforcement, SB791 provides guidance and consistency for correctional and law enforcement personnel across Maryland.

At a time when immigration policy continues to be debated at the national level, states and local jurisdictions must lead with clarity, compassion, and a commitment to public safety. SB791 strikes that balance. It protects civil liberties, strengthens community trust, and allows local agencies to focus on their core mission.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a **favorable report on Senate Bill 791**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Calvin Ball', is written over a faint, light blue circular watermark or seal.

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive