

Dear Honorable Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amir Naviwala, and I am a candidate for County Council in Howard County. I testify today in strong support of HB309, which stands as a defense of constitutional rights and for the integrity of our courts. When immigrants fear arrest just for attending court, justice is compromised. The ability to face legal proceedings without intimidation is a fundamental pillar of due process.

The practice of courthouse arrests has driven many to avoid hearings out of fear, eroding the justice system itself. HB309 addresses this by prohibiting civil enforcement within a radius around judicial facilities. Yet, one mile is insufficient. ICE agents can easily wait just beyond that boundary. To ensure safe passage home after court, the radius must be larger—encompassing the full realistic scope of travel.

I urge you to pass HB309 immediately. Even as it stands, it is essential to restore faith in our judicial system. But let us not stop there. I strongly urge an amendment to expand the protected radius—ensuring that no one is tracked and detained just outside an arbitrary line. We must do better for all our residents. Pass this bill now and, ideally, strengthen it to fully protect those who desperately need it.

Thank you for your time,

Amir Naviwala

Candidate for Howard County Council (D-3)