

**Testimony on House Bill – Favorable**  
**HB 444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition**

**House Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**January 27, 2026**

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

My name is Samantha Hodge-Williams, and I am a resident of Garrett County, Maryland. I am writing in support of SB 245 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition.

ICE cooperation is economically harmful to our entire state, has a negative effect on crime rates, violates constitutional protections, and increases local law enforcement expenses. It negatively impacts our State at every level: professionally and economically, in population and in community.

At the professional level, Maryland benefits from a base of internationally recruited expertise from around the world; indeed, our state institutions and businesses employ some of the brightest minds from abroad. However, these same experts no longer feel safe in an environment with repeated ICE civil violations. Personally, I know medical experts from abroad—specialists, financial advisors, and highly trained researchers—who, despite having obtained U.S. citizenship years ago, are now relocating to institutions in countries other than the United States, taking their skills and experience with them. They see little choice: they do not want to live in a state that permits or cooperates with the ICE intimidation, abductions, and abuse that are now uncurbed by the due process that was taken for granted for so long. I ask you: how are Maryland and its citizens the better for these losses of expertise, not worse? Cooperation between local law enforcement and ICE will only increase these losses.

At the economical level, it harms the State to lose the hard-working immigrant population that bolsters our economy with their state and federal taxes. Immigrants are an asset because their skills, willingness to work hard, and commitment to and gratitude for freedom. “The American Immigration Council estimates that in 2021 Maryland’s combined population of immigrants paid \$13.3 billion in federal, state, and local taxes and had total spending power of \$33.1 billion” (April 2024 Maryland Comptroller Report: State of the Economy). Undocumented immigrants alone paid nearly \$780 million in state and local taxes in 2022, without the ability to collect on social services. Maryland will be economically poorer without them.

In the context of population, “Immigrants have long bolstered Maryland’s population. Over the past decade, in the face of natural population decline and increasing domestic outmigration, immigrants have been a source of stability for the state...Immigrants are more likely to participate in the labor force than U.S.-born Marylanders.” These facts are critical in the face of labor shortages seen in Maryland post-pandemic (April 2024 Maryland Comptroller Report: State of the Economy). Garrett County, for example, has had significant population decline and a lack of necessary medical and other service professionals. The well-being of our county depends on its ability to attract and to recruit new “outsider” families to bolster our population, not intimidate and frighten them away through 287g partnerships with ICE.

In closing, I would like to address the erroneous argument that by permitting 287g agreements, Maryland will decrease the likelihood of increased ICE raids and immigrant arrests. In fact, states that cooperate with ICE have by far the highest arrest rates, mostly of non-criminal residents, since state law enforcement provides the manpower and jails. A December 2025 analysis of ICE arrest data shows that "...the impact of state and local strategies to block ICE access to jails is visible in data from Illinois, New York, and Oregon, where ICE arrests remain lower than other states... the data, which show significantly smaller jumps in arrest rates in states where advocates have most aggressively worked to reject collaboration, and much higher rates in states that have embraced it." (Data obtained via FOIA request and processed by the Deportation Data Project & analyzed by the Prison Policy Initiative <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2025/12/11/ice-jails-update/>. The single exception to this was New Jersey, in which local sheriffs continued to cooperate with ICE outside of the banned 287g agreement. These results from other states show the need for a supplemental bill to forbid officers from working against Maryland's protections of immigrants.

It is for these reasons that I ask you to vote in support of SB0245 - the Maryland Values Act. Please vote to protect the resources, economy, and integrity of the State of Maryland and those residing within.