

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable
HB 444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition
House Judiciary Committee
January 27, 2026

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

My name is Erin Hodge-Williams. I am a resident of Baltimore City and a homeowner in Garrett County, Maryland. I am writing in support of *HB 444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition*.

I am a licensed clinical social worker with over 35 years of experience working in community settings and as a psychotherapist in private practice. My professional expertise includes depression, anxiety, trauma- including vicarious trauma, and community-level trauma.

Clinical research and long-standing evidence in the fields of psychology, social work, and public health demonstrate that exposure to aggressive or violent law enforcement activity—whether directly, as a bystander, or through repeated media exposure—can result in trauma-related symptoms including anxiety, hypervigilance, sleep disturbance, and impaired functioning. These effects are not limited to the individuals directly involved but extend to families, children, and entire communities.

A key public safety concern associated with 287(g) agreements is the erosion of trust in local law enforcement. Decades of policing and public health research show that community trust is essential to effective public safety. When local law enforcement is perceived as an extension of federal immigration enforcement, community members—particularly in immigrant and mixed-status communities—are less likely to report crimes, seek assistance, or cooperate as witnesses, even when they are victims. This undermines crime prevention, investigation, and overall community safety.

My prior work in Baltimore communities reflects these findings. Communities where law enforcement operated in lawful, transparent, and community-centered ways experienced higher cooperation and lower levels of violence. In contrast, aggressive or unaccountable policing practices—especially when perpetuated by local law enforcement officials that are familiar to the residents- were associated with increased fear, disengagement, and a sense of futility among residents, including children—conditions that are known risk factors for long-term trauma and community instability.

The role of social media further amplifies these harms. Law enforcement encounters are frequently recorded and widely disseminated, increasing exposure to potentially traumatic events and, in smaller communities, further eroding trust when local officers are identifiable.

From both a clinical and public safety perspective, 287(g) agreements contribute to community-wide fear, psychological harm, and reduced cooperation with law enforcement, while diverting local resources away from core public safety functions.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 444 – *Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition*.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erin Hodge-Williams".

Respectfully,
Erin Hodge-Williams, LCSW