



Testimony - HB 444, Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements - Prohibition
Favorable
House Judiciary Committee
January 27, 2026
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Honorable Chairwoman Bartlett & Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents more than 20,000 public sector and nonprofit workers across Maryland, including educators, public employees, and frontline workers who serve diverse communities every day. Many of our members derive from or live and work alongside immigrant families. They understand firsthand that community safety depends on trust, not fear.

House Bill 444 takes an important and necessary step to protect that trust by prohibiting the State, local governments, and county sheriffs from entering into immigration enforcement agreements that deputize local officials to carry out federal civil immigration enforcement. The bill also responsibly requires the termination of any existing agreements by July 1, 2026, ensuring clarity and consistency statewide.

When local law enforcement or public agencies are entangled in federal immigration enforcement, the result is not increased safety—it is the opposite. These agreements undermine public trust, discourage immigrant communities from reporting crimes or cooperating with investigations, and place frontline public workers in roles they were never trained for and should never be required to perform.

For SEIU Local 500 members, this issue is also about workplace safety and clarity of mission. Public servants should be focused on providing services, ensuring public safety, and supporting community well-being—not enforcing civil immigration law under

federal agreements that expose workers and communities to harm, confusion, and liability.

HB 444 reinforces a clear and appropriate division of responsibility: civil immigration enforcement is a federal function, not a local or state one. By drawing this line, the bill protects civil liberties, promotes effective policing, and helps ensure that all Maryland residents—regardless of immigration status—can access public services without fear.

This legislation reflects Maryland's values of fairness, inclusion, and smart public safety policy. It strengthens communities, supports public workers, and makes clear that cooperation with law enforcement should never come at the cost of basic human dignity.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 respectfully urges the members of this committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 444.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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