

January 27, 2026

TESTIMONY ON HB0444 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements - Prohibition

TO: Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Aubrey Jackson Soller, PhD. Catonsville, MD (District 10)

My name is Aubrey Jackson Soller. I am a resident of Catonsville in Baltimore County, District 10, and an Associate Professor at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, where I serve as Associate Director of the Center for Social Science Scholarship. I also serve on the Board of the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women. **I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0444.**

I come before you today as both a social scientist and as the daughter of a Mexican immigrant. My connection to Maryland's Hispanic and Latino communities gives me deep appreciation for their contributions to our state. As a parent, I am committed to raising my children to be proud of their Mexican American heritage—a heritage intertwined with the stories of countless immigrant families who have built their lives here and contributed immeasurably to Maryland.

As a scholar specializing in crime, law, and the wellbeing of women and families, I am encouraged by rigorous research demonstrating clear public benefits of immigration. Multiple peer-reviewed studies in leading journals show that areas with higher immigrant concentrations experience lower violent crime rates, not higher. Critically, these protective effects are strongest when local policies welcome and support immigrant communities.

The scholars behind this research emphasize that strong, cohesive immigrant communities are essential to these beneficial outcomes. However, aggressive immigration enforcement tactics threaten this community trust. When immigrants fear local authorities, when families are separated, and when communities live under enforcement threats, we undermine the very trust and cooperation that produces public safety and health benefits.

HB 444 represents sound, evidence-based policy. By prohibiting state and local participation in federal immigration enforcement, Maryland protects the community trust that benefits all residents. This lets our local law enforcement focus on public safety without federal immigration enforcement—a role that erodes trust and makes everyone less safe.

Recent federal immigration actions jeopardize the vibrant immigrant communities that exemplify core American values of hope, hard work, and unity. These communities are not a threat to Maryland's safety and wellbeing—they are integral to it. The evidence is clear: **Supporting immigrant communities through protective policies creates safer neighborhoods, healthier populations, and stronger social bonds.**

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB 444. Thank you for your consideration and for your leadership in protecting all Maryland residents.

Respectfully submitted,

Aubrey Jackson Soller, PhD