



Testimony on HB 444 - 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,

Silver Spring Justice Coalition offers **favorable** testimony in support of **HB-444 - Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition**.

The Silver Spring Justice Coalition is an organization of community members, faith groups, and civil and human rights organizations from throughout Montgomery County that works to reduce the presence of police in our communities; eliminate violence and harm by police; establish transparency and accountability; and redirect public funds toward community needs.

This bill is about upholding Maryland's values—fairness, dignity, and justice for all. This bill affirms that our state should not be in the business of tearing families apart, undermining public trust, or funneling state and local resources into a federal deportation agenda. Instead, Maryland should remain focussed on community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law by prohibiting immigration enforcement agreements such as 287(g).

Our immigrant community is under siege by federal government actions. Places in Montgomery County that used to bustle are empty and quiet because immigrants (and some who might be perceived as immigrants) are afraid to venture out for fear of a chance encounter with federal officials or local law enforcement. Immigrants are having food delivered by local mutual aid groups, getting others to take their children to school (or keeping them home), setting up Standby Guardianship for their children in case the parents are detained or deported, and even afraid to answer their phones or open their door to anyone they do not know.

Immigrants are also increasingly fearful of going to required government appointments, where they could be detained or face deportation to a third country, which ensures they are targeted and face deportation if found.

Thus it is vital that the State minimize the daily risks immigrants face by protecting them from encounters with federal actions in as many ways as possible.

The 287(g) program has a well-documented history of racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detentions. It diverts local law enforcement from their primary duty of protecting public safety, forcing them to act as immigration agents rather than community protectors. This erodes trust, particularly among immigrant communities, making people less likely to report crimes or

seek help when needed, such as in domestic violence cases. Ending 287(g) ensures Maryland's resources are used to foster public safety—not help the federal deportation agenda.

It was bad enough when three counties in Maryland had 287(g) programs. In the last year, that has increased to eight counties, which spreads the negative consequences to more communities and to those passing through them. And we know that the current federal administration wants to expand 287(g) programs, which are problematic as is, to include investigation and interrogation, further diverting our law enforcement personnel from their local duties. Under the earlier 287(g) programs, we've seen a husband and father deported after a flat tire because of a civil immigration violation.

As part of the Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, along with CASA, we support a clean bill which will end 287(g) agreements in Maryland, and not to create or mandate new forms of collaboration with ICE. Local jurisdictions already have the discretion to engage with ICE if they choose; ending 287(g) agreements does not limit that existing authority. We strongly support a clean bill that simply terminates 287(g) agreements in Maryland. This is what will bring Maryland closer to our values.

For these reasons, the **Silver Spring Justice Coalition** adamantly urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a **favorable report** on **HB 444**.

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