

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 Valerie 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.

I am writing to express my support for SB0245 - Public Safety-Immigration Enforcement Agreements-Prohibition. As a Garrett County resident, I appreciate small-town life: its community, connectedness, and freedom from the fear of violence and intimidation. Emphatically, I do not want our local law enforcement—whom we currently trust—bringing in federal ICE officers— whom we do not. Our small community doesn't need the presence of highly armed, minimally trained ICE employees who neither know our residents, nor care for them, to change the peaceful tenor of our lives into one of dread and fear.

Maryland counties without 287g agreements have had greater drops in crime rates than those counties with 287g agreements: Frederick, Cecil, and Carroll. No community members should feel unsafe reaching out to local law enforcement to report a crime as a witness or victim; with 287g agreements, many will remain silent. Frederick County's Sheriff Jenkins' years of 287g partnership has eroded local trust and brought the county under scrutiny with lawsuits for racial profiling.

Furthermore, police detention of individuals found innocent of any crime, or released by the courts on bail, is a violation of constitutional rights.

The vast majority of 287g detainees are non-criminals, who leave behind families and children without breadwinners and caregivers. This is not only terribly traumatic for children, but also creates an unnecessary burden on the state – to support and care for the US children remaining. Instead of spending local funding on manpower and jails to remove non-criminal parents from their children, these funds should be used to help improve schools, childcare, children's hospitals and services.

I have heard the argument that 287g agreement protect the community from additional ICE intervention and arrests. Nationally, this has not been true. 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.

"And then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for me."
—*First They Came* by Pastor Martin Niemoller