

**Testimony on House Bill 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,

EdTrust, a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy & advocacy organization working to dismantle the racial and economic barriers embedded in the American education system offers favorable testimony in support of **HB 444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition**.

EdTrust is committed to ensuring that all students – no matter their race, socioeconomic status, or real or perceived immigration status – have access to a high-quality education. For over 30 years EdTrust has worked to advance policies and practices that further this goal at the federal and state levels. We write today to demonstrate the ways in which 287(g) agreements have a devastating impact on students' academic achievement and long-term outcomes.

In addition to the racial profiling and over-policing of communities of color that 287(g) agreements perpetuate, **studies indicate that heightened immigration enforcement drastically increases student absenteeism**. In California, up to and following immigration raids, schools serving large numbers of immigrant students saw an 22-35% increase in absences. Importantly, **these increases occurred even though the immigration enforcement actions were not at schools** and persisted for several weeks afterwards. Similar trends have been observed in Illinois and Washington. **The persistence of 287(g) agreements in Maryland threatens to undermine years of progress on student attendance**. Chronic absenteeism rates, in which students miss 10% or more of school, have been steadily decreasing for the past two years. However, Black, Latino, and Multilingual students continue to have some of the highest rates of chronic absenteeism in the state. The continuation of 287(g) agreements will only undermine efforts to address these trends and encourage students to return to school. Furthermore, as chronic absenteeism is linked to higher drop-out rates, as well as decreased academic outcomes for all students, 287(g) agreements also threaten to undermine the academic achievement of Maryland's students - something the state has recently redoubled its dedication to through passage of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

In addition to the academic impacts on students, **287(g) agreements harm students' mental health and strain the relationship between schools and parents**. Families are an integral part of students' success, and the threat of deportation can stop many immigrant families from attending parent-teacher conferences or school events. This decreased engagement has negative impacts on students' learning and breaks the link between schools and communities. These policies also create a climate of fear in schools – where students struggle to pay attention while fearing for their families' or friends' safety. These constant stressors lead to decreases in students' mental health, something that is directly linked to their academic outcomes and long-term achievement.

When Black and Brown students can't attend school without fear, our entire state suffers. Our students are our future, and in order for Maryland to prosper in the years to come, we must be committed to their success. Families should not be forced to choose between their safety and their children's education. Students' futures should not be hindered by frequent absences and constant mental stress. **By protecting our students and families through banning 287(g), Maryland will reaffirm that every young person is a child with potential—not a threat to be eliminated.**

For these reasons, EdTrust urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a **favorable report** on **HB 444**.

Sincerely,

Augustus Mays

Vice President, Partnerships and Engagement, EdTrust