

Date of Hearing: Thursday 2/25/26

Name: Andrew J. Miller

Address: Baltimore, MD 21209

TESTIMONY ON HBI575 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

**Correctional Services and Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement - Prohibitions
(Community Trust Act)**

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

FROM: Andrew J. Miller

My name is Andrew Miller. I am a resident of District 11B. I am submitting this testimony in support of HBI575, Correctional Services and Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement – Prohibitions (Community Trust Act).

I am a Past President of Chizuk Amuno Congregation, a large Conservative synagogue in Pikesville, and I am also Chair of the Synagogue Social Justice Roundtable which includes representatives from 12 partner communities and organizations in Baltimore County, Baltimore City and Howard County.

Our sacred texts command us to love the stranger, as we ourselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt, and many of our families came to the United States to escape persecution. For me and for many in my community, protection of immigrants is therefore a sacred obligation. For the last several years our congregation and others have worked in support of Afghan refugee families fleeing the Taliban by providing direct support with the help of refugee relief organizations that worked in collaboration with the federal government until those collaborations were terminated in 2025.

Many of us have also worked over the last 9 years, together with immigrant support organizations, to protect the rights of others who arrived in our country to take refuge from oppressive conditions elsewhere in the world. Immigrants are important contributors to our economy and to our communities here in Maryland, where they make up 17% of the population and contribute to the economy, pay taxes, and create businesses that provide employment opportunities. According to a 2024 report by the Maryland Comptroller's Office, "Immigrants have long bolstered Maryland's population, and they are essential for a thriving economy and economic growth." All of us who are not Native Americans are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants, many of whom came here to escape persecution and all of whom came to seek a better life.

It has become clear over the past year, and particularly in the last two months, that our federal immigration enforcement agencies are not focusing their efforts primarily on capturing people who have committed serious crime. These agencies are now operating almost entirely outside the framework of federal law and the Constitution, and the practices of these agencies

facilitate intimidation, detention and deportation of people they wish to target, whether they are asylum seekers, green-card holders, or undocumented individuals who have lived here for decades and who have contributed to society and the economy and have no criminal record.

Here in Baltimore County, as in Howard County, Prince Georges County, Montgomery County, and hopefully soon in other jurisdictions including Baltimore City, local government has stepped up with our legislators voting to pass bills that limit or curtail voluntary collaboration with agencies that are carrying out what should be civil enforcement using paramilitary tactics. Now we are fighting attempts to build a network of massive detention centers in private warehouses across the country, including here in Maryland. These are used to incarcerate both individuals and families, including young children, often under appalling and inhumane conditions without adequate access to medical care, food, water, legal counsel, education and mental health services. People have died in these facilities with little or no accountability by the federal authorities overseeing their detention. It is not only our immigrant neighbors who are at risk; it is the very concept that all of us are protected by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

The Community Trust Act before this committee is very similar in its language and its goals to those that have been passed by local government in the jurisdictions listed above. I probably spent 60 hours or more mobilizing people and lobbying council members on behalf of the Baltimore County Trust Act because I believe it is so important to the well-being of our community. What is true at the local level is even more true at the state level.

Therefore I respectfully ask this committee to return a favorable report on HBI 575.