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Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements - Prohibition

Judiciary Committee

January 27, 2026

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish social service agencies, synagogues, and schools throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, tolerance and equity. We work throughout the region to advocate for our nonprofits that serve the most vulnerable on a non-sectarian basis and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the Jewish community and all Marylanders.

The JCRC supports House Bill 444 which prohibits the State, local government, county sheriff, or any agency, officer, employee, or agent of the State or local government unit from entering into an immigration enforcement agreement. HB 444 also requires the termination of an existing immigration enforcement agreement by or before July 1, 2026.

This Bill serves to ensure that Maryland remains a welcoming and inclusive state where local law enforcement keeps communities safe and treats its residents with dignity and respect. Today, our immigrant community does not feel safe. 287(g) agreements, which give local police authority to participate in federal immigration enforcement, means immigrants are afraid to go to work, afraid to drop their children at school, and afraid they will never see their families again. To be effective, local police must garner the public's trust and not instill fear with warrantless arrests and detentions.

In 2025, according to the Deportation Data Project, more than 3300 Marylanders were detained by ICE. That is twice the number of preceding years, and the majority had never before been charged with a crime. This legislation to ban 287(g) agreements establishes that local police will not engage in federal immigration action but instead focus on community safety to ensure all residents feel secure, receive due process, and are treated fairly. The JCRC understands the importance of balancing the security of our state with individuals' rights.

Supporting immigrants has always been a priority for the JCRC, especially since we, the Jewish people, have been immigrants. We know all too well what it feels like to be vulnerable and to be attacked for who we are. Right now, across the state, our immigrant community is under attack. Our Jewish tradition commands us to welcome the stranger and protect the most

vulnerable. We must stand up for our immigrant neighbors and not allow local police to carry out federal immigration law enforcement. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for House Bill 444.