

TESTIMONY ON HB0444 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition
Date of Hearing: January 27, 2026

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

From: Linda Bergofsky, Montgomery County, MD

I am writing to express my unwavering support for HB0444, which would prohibit the State, a unit of local government, a county sheriff, or any agency, officer, employee, or agent of the State or a unit of local government from entering into a certain immigration enforcement agreement. The bill also requires entities with existing agreements to terminate them by July 1, 2026.

By way of background, I am a member of Oseh Shalom, a Reconstructionist synagogue in Laurel. We are an inclusive and welcoming community that is informed by teachings of the Torah. The insistence that we behave with care, equity, and love toward the stranger is the most-repeated command in the entire Torah. Our sacred texts insist that we turn our own historical experiences of being outsiders in many foreign lands into compassion for those experiencing the same today. As Jews and as human beings, we are obligated to make sure that those of us who were not born in our community are as safe as those of us who were.

I recognize that in some jurisdictions in Maryland, entering into certain immigration enforcement agreements reflected a commitment to the idea that local law enforcement should collaborate with Federal law enforcement, when possible. The fact that local jurisdictions could be paid for this collaboration made the decision to collaborate that much easier.

However, since the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency has been transformed into a domestic terrorist organization that has forsaken the rule of law and routinely violates human rights, the notion of such agreements in our State is unconscionable. Stopping people randomly and asking for papers proving citizenship is reminiscent of the Third Reich and should not be allowed.

The vast majority of people detained this way have no criminal record. But, since the Supreme Court granted ICE the ability to use racial profiling with impunity, none of us is safe from being stopped, detained, isolated from our families, and threatened with deportation. People have died in ICE custody. If a person detained by local law enforcement or the Maryland State Police should be injured or die while in custody, think of the legal exposure that would be created. More importantly, 287(g) agreements foment ongoing racial and ethnic animus. I am supporting this bill because it will address the immorality of such arrangements. Prohibiting any and all agreements with ICE or any other operating division of the Department of Homeland Security is the only way to stop the 287(g) gravy train and permission structure that turns local law enforcement agencies against the people they are supposed to protect.

For all these reasons, I urge the Committee to make a favorable report for HB0444.

Thank you for your consideration.