

Testimony on House Bill 1262 – Favorable
HB 1262: Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Restrictions

House Judiciary Committee

March 5, 2026

Honorable Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is **Tamara Zuniga**, and I am a **Progressive Maryland member from Montgomery County, Maryland**. I am writing in support of **HB 1262: Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Restrictions**, which seeks to codify existing constitutional protections against racial profiling by explicitly forbidding law enforcement from racial profiling. Progressive Maryland is a grassroots power-building member-led organization that centers working-class voices in our work to build a more just and equitable Maryland for everyone.

Progressive Maryland stands firmly against racial profiling as this violates the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments and undermines public safety and community trust in our state. Racial profiling by law enforcement remains a persistent issue in Maryland. Black Marylanders are consistently stopped at disproportionately higher rates than white drivers. Among those stopped, Black drivers are less likely to receive a warning, more likely to receive a citation and more likely to be arrested. Moreover, for over a year, federal agents have been acting lawlessly across American cities by violating existing protections, racially profiling residents, and committing abuses without consequence.

The Supreme Court has indicated a desire to erode our constitutional protections against racial profiling, greenlighting practices in California long considered to be violations of the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments. Maryland must act now to ensure existing protections against racial profiling are not eroded here. Racial profiling does not make our communities safer. We must make it clear that when any law enforcement officer is using Maryland law in enforcement, they are bound by our state laws. Federal, state, and local law enforcement must be held accountable when they violate our rights.

As someone who lives in a predominantly Latino area, I rarely think about the fact that I am visibly a brown woman of color. I don't think about how people who look just like me are being targeted across the country and automatically assigned stereotypes for being brown and visibly Latino. I am able to just be. All members of my immediate community don't perceive that race is never a large issue. However, considering that a good portion of us work, shop, and live in different parts of Maryland where that may not be the reality, it is a sobering thought that one look at us from any law enforcement officer could be the start of a look that can quickly turn into a life altering situation. Someone who believes in these stereotypes may have the authority to force upon their preconceived notions and change a life for the worst.

As a member of Progressive Maryland we believe in banning law enforcement from targeting someone based on that person's perceived or actual race, ethnicity, or nationality, rather than evidence of illegality. This legislature has the power to protect Marylanders from being racially profiled and limit abuses by law enforcement. This moment calls for every one of us to have courage in the wake of this lawless administration. For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on HB 1262.

Thank you for your time and consideration.