

January 27, 2026

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**TESTIMONY ON HB0444 - POSITION: FAVORABLE**  
**Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements - Prohibition**

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

**FROM:** Rabbi Charles L. Arian, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

My name is Rabbi Charles L. Arian. I am a resident of District 39. I am the rabbi of Kehilat Shalom Congregation in Montgomery Village and an appointed member of the Social Justice Commission of my denomination, Conservative/Masorti Judaism. I am an active member of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, and a participant and supporter of Jews United for Justice. **I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ) in support of HB0444, Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements - Prohibition.** JUFJ organizes over 6,000 Jews and allies from across Maryland in support of social, racial, and economic justice campaigns at the state and local levels.

The most-repeated commandment in the entire Torah is the commandment to love the stranger, to treat the stranger with kindness, and to refrain from oppressing the stranger. While no policy can claim 100 percent support in the Jewish community, the majority of mainstream denominations joined a lawsuit against the revocation of the Sensitive Areas Policy. Jewish communities across this state are heartbroken and enraged by the ongoing actions by the federal government targeting immigrant communities because we know that our wellbeing and safety are inextricably linked to our immigrant neighbors. We are moved to action both by our values and our histories.

Like most American Jews of my generation, I am the grandchild of immigrants. Growing up I heard stories from my immigrant relatives of the hardships they suffered on the way from the Czarist Empire to the United States, sneaking across borders and bribing border guards (they walked on foot from Ilya, Belarus, to Antwerp, Belgium, a distance of over 1000 miles.) I learned of the difficulties they had adjusting to a new land and a new language. My great-grandparents lived in the same apartment as my father did growing up, which is why his first language was Yiddish and he did not learn English until he began kindergarten, even though he lived in Brooklyn. Only recently did I learn that my grandmother had an older half sister who was denied entry at Ellis Island and as a result went to Mexico. Even more recently I reunited

with our cousins there over Zoom. I would love to meet them in person but in good conscience cannot advise Mexican citizens to enter this country even with a visa.

Since the summer of 2025, I have been participating in various organizations which observe and document ICE activities. A few weeks ago I witnessed someone being taken into custody during an ICE check-in, and there were a significant number of what seemed like ICE personnel outside the building even though their uniforms only said "Federal Officer" or "Homeland Security." There were also two officers from MCPD who were chatting in a very friendly way with the ICE personnel, although I did not observe them participating in the actual detention.

We all know that even US citizens have been detained by ICE, sometimes for several weeks, and we all saw video of the homicide of Renee Nicole Good in Minneapolis on January 7. When immigrants or even native born citizens who "look like" immigrants are afraid to call the police after being the victim of or witnessing a crime, we are all less safe. When children are afraid to go to school our society is less prepared and less competitive. When people are afraid to seek medical care, our society is less healthy.

For all the above reasons, passage of HB0444 will not only benefit immigrants. It will benefit the citizens of Maryland in general. It is incumbent upon the General Assembly to do everything within its power to end local collaboration with ICE and other federal agencies targeting immigrant communities and tearing families apart. This must include finally banning 287(g) agreements in our state.

**On behalf of JUFJ, I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0444.**