



Testimony on House Bill – Favorable
HB 444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition
House Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 27, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, Delegate Williams, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you, Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, Sponsoring Delegate Williams, and members of the committee for sponsoring this important public safety bill. My name is Jean Montgomery, and I am a community member of Olney, Maryland and a District 14 resident. I am writing **in strong support of HB 444– Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition**. I offer this written testimony on behalf of Indivisible MoCoWoMen, as well as a private citizen.

I personally care about this issue because I have a multicultural family, some of which are naturalized citizens. My family contributes to our state and our local economies, as public servants, medical professionals, business owners, and job creators for teams of employees. We travel along highways and parkways to go to work and travel home every day, the very same roads that ICE vehicles zip up and down in order to get to Maryland counties which have 287g agreements, such as Allegany, Carroll, Cecil, Garrett, Harford, St. Mary's, and Washington County. When a family member is late, my heart catches in my throat. Where are they? Are they okay? Has the very government that granted them protection and asylum from a war-torn country now seeking to take them away? These feel like strange, unreal fears while living in America and raising our children. But given the lawlessness and aggression with which ICE operates and the denaturalization rhetoric coming from the very top of our federal government, this is a very real visceral fear.

I am lucky in that whenever I have experienced this, my family member (s) has/have arrived home safely. Others in Maryland have not been so lucky. Like...

- Gelber, kidnapped on his way to work, leaving behind his wife, three children, and an 8-person construction crew he managed as part of his small business.
- Luis, kidnapped by ICE after attending a regular immigration check-in, leaving behind a wife and three children.
- Franco, kidnapped by ICE while finishing work, leaving behind a wife and small children.
- A father and small business owner in Watkins Mills, kidnapped by ICE on his way to work, leaving behind a wife and three kids.
- H, a 17 year old senior at Montgomery Blair High School, whose father was kidnapped by ICE and now finds himself responsible for finishing school, paying the household expenses, and obtaining legal aid for his father.
- And many, many more.

I support HB 444 because immigration enforcement agreements like 287(g) create fear in immigrant communities and undermine public safety for everyone. When people fear contact with law enforcement, they are less likely to report crimes, seek help, or cooperate as witnesses—even when they are victims. It sets neighborhoods and communities on a hyper-vigilant edge with the idea that the very public servants in whom we should trust could hurt us. Programs like 287(g) have also been associated with racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detention. They divert local resources away from protecting communities. When these egregious agreements are in place, our Maryland residents are not protected, and families, schools, neighborhoods, communities, and economies are destabilized. Indeed, would you want to put down roots, buy homes, start businesses, send your children to local schools, and invest in the economies of Allegany, Carroll, Cecil, Garrett, Harford, St. Mary's, and Washington County, if the very law enforcement there, sworn to protect you, had a partnership that could unlawfully hurt you?

I support HB 444 because doing so supports our state industries and economy. Highways and parkways cross our state, linking cities, towns, and business centers. ICE menaces our economies when it limits residents ability to travel our very own roadways, due to the threat of illegal search, seizure, and imprisonment without judicial warrant. Willingness to conduct business and take entrepreneurial risks shrinks under this terrorizing environment. For example, a close family friend operates a home improvement business with a 20-man crew. His employees are honest, hardworking people, some of which are citizens, some of which are in the long process of becoming citizens, many of which have brown skin and are Spanish-speaking. Our family friend is loath to have his crews travel highways, parkways, and roads near or take up lucrative business contracts near the Maryland counties which have 287g agreements, for fear that some of his employees may not make it home. When business owners do not take risks, what kind of economic impact does that have on our state's prosperity?

Lastly, I support HB 444 because doing so improves safety, trust, and fairness in our community. Each person in the United States should be able to wake, live, learn or work, connect with family and friends, rest, and wake again without the fear or threat of illegal searches, seizures, trafficked transport across state lines, and imprisonment without due process or a free and fair trial. Given that ICE operates lawlessly, with impunity, aggression, and cruelty, when Maryland police officers operate with them, our state's legal standards, character, and honor is sullied. Let's wash out the stain and restore faith in our Constitutional freedoms, trust in our state law enforcement process, safety in our community, and fairness through equal access and protection under the law.

For these above stated reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue **a favorable report on HB 444**. For our children, families, neighbors, communities, and economy. **For Maryland.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jean Montgomery
Private Citizen
Indivisible MoCoWoMen Steering Committee Member