



**Testimony in SUPPORT of
House Bill 444: Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition
House Judiciary Committee
Position: Support
January 27, 2026**

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

At Strong Schools Maryland, we work to support the faithful implementation and full funding of the promises legislated through the landmark Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. The Blueprint envisions a public education system where all students can feel safe and supported to learn and thrive in their school community. It was designed to specifically address systemic inequities that disproportionately impact historically marginalized communities. The students and families promised this sense of safety and support include our immigrant communities. As a result, **Strong Schools Maryland offers favorable testimony in support of HB 444 Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition.**

At its core, HB 444 is about upholding Maryland’s values – fairness, dignity, and justice for all. This legislation recognizes that state and local governments should not be pulled into federal immigration enforcement through agreements such as 287(g). These agreements undermine public trust, divert state and local resources, and tear families, school communities apart. HB 444 affirms that Maryland should remain focused on community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law by prohibiting harmful immigration enforcement agreements such as 287(g).

These immigration enforcement agreements deeply undermine the safety, stability, and well being of students and the broader school community. When there is increased federal immigration enforcement activity, there are documented declines in school attendance as families, fearing separation, withdraw their children. Moving reactively due to systemic marginalization disrupts student education and often leads to significant negative impacts to academic outcomes.¹ Beyond academic threats, the pervasive threat of federal immigration enforcement and activity contributes to toxic stress in children which increases risk of depression, anxiety, PTSD, and severe psychological distress.²

The 287(g) program has a documented history of racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detention. As a result, the burden of these negative impacts overwhelmingly fall on Black and Brown children in our public schools. Further, programs such as 287(g) promote disengagement from essential social supports, limiting critical resources for families and weakening community trust.³

¹ [How Strict Immigration Enforcement Harms School Children](#)

² [American Immigration Council](#)

³ [Immigration Enforcement and US Schools: What Could Happen and What Education Leaders Can Do](#)

When families are afraid to report crimes, seek help, or engage with public institutions, public safety suffers.

These enforcement practices directly contradict the mission of our public school system. The Blueprint is built on the very foundation of active community engagement and accountability to governing systems in order to ensure that all students are equitably served, including and prioritizing supports and protections for immigrant and undocumented students. It is interwoven into every pillar of the Blueprint. Without preserving the protections for immigrant communities, the promises of the Blueprint will never be realized, and real students and families will be harmed in the process.

For these reasons, Strong Schools Maryland urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 444.

Please contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org for additional questions.