

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

HB309 Judicial Facilities - Stops, Detentions, and Arrests – Limitations

House Judiciary Committee

February 2, 2026

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

I, Lia Nigro, am writing to offer favorable testimony in support of **HB309- Judicial Facilities - Stops, Detentions, and Arrests – Limitations**

As a volunteer for both social justice organization Indivisible and food pantry Columbia Community Cares, I have seen local immigrant families too scared to even go grocery shopping for fear of ICE. With nationwide publicity regarding courtroom and court parking lot arrests by ICE, a court date that may be necessary to maintain an asylum application or other status becomes even more terrifying. It is both ironic and sad that what is required to stay legally in this country is now too often perceived as a trap that will lead to deportation.

The now constant fear that ICE agents may be lurking has affected immigrant willingness to make any court appearance, whether to work out issues in family court or testify in a criminal case where they are a witness. An ACLU survey found that over 50 percent of judges had found ICE operations disrupting cases and the support of crime survivors. Even court translators and other non-U.S. born employees have been affected, choosing to avoid coming to court.

As an example of the effect on immigration hearings, one judge in California (Kyra S. Lilien, quoted in Border Report) found immigrant appearances for hearings dropped from 85 percent to 30 percent after ICE began arrests following court appearances.

Fear undermines public safety by discouraging crime victims and witnesses from participating in the judicial system. Such arrests violate constitutional rights of due process and of equal protection under the law.

HB309 provides a simple remedy allowing Maryland to uphold these rights. Passage of HB309 and publicizing the measure (which Indivisible can help with) can bring immigrants back into full and willing participation in the judicial system.

I urge you to vote in favor of this bill.

Further information:

Freezing Out Justice <https://www.aclu.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/rep18-icecourthouse-combined-rel01.pdf>

Border Report, November 2025 <https://www.borderreport.com/hot-topics/immigration/up-to-70-skipping-immigration-hearings-for-fear-of-ice/>