

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)
Testimony before the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,
HB444, Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement
Submitted January 23, 2026
Position: Support

“We are disturbed when we see among our people a climate of fear and anxiety around questions of profiling and immigration enforcement. We are saddened by the state of contemporary debate and the vilification of immigrants...We are grieved when we meet parents who fear being detained when taking their children to school and when we try to console family members who have already been separated from their loved ones...For this very reason, we feel compelled now in this environment to raise our voices in defense of God-given human dignity.” (*Special Message on Immigration from the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ Plenary Assembly in Baltimore, Nov. 12, 2025*)

About CLINIC

As the nation’s largest charitable immigration legal services network, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (“CLINIC”) provides substantive legal and program management training and resources as well as advocacy support at state, local, and national levels. CLINIC serves over 400 affiliates organizations across 49 states and the District of Columbia, providing crucial legal services to hundreds of thousands of low-income and otherwise vulnerable immigrants every year.

Embracing the Gospel value of welcoming the stranger, CLINIC cultivates projects that promote the dignity and protect the rights of vulnerable immigrant populations. CLINIC’s national office is in Silver Spring, Maryland. In serving our affiliate network and through our programming, CLINIC has particular expertise in the life-changing -- and at times life-saving -- role that access to representation makes in the life of an immigrant.

Position

CLINIC supports HB 444, the bill prohibiting state and local law enforcement, agencies, employees, and others from entering into immigration enforcement agreements, while also providing a plan for termination of existing agreements.

Many of our affiliates support immigrant victims of crime. We often hear how clients or potential clients are scared away from reporting crimes because immigrants see law enforcement agencies with 287(g) agreements as an extension of immigration enforcement. We have seen the negative impact of 287(g) agreements on immigrant communities.

CLINIC’s own State and Local Advocacy Attorney has focused on this issue for several years, attending hearings, educating communities, and writing op-eds about what she has seen in states like [Kansas](#) as well as [Maryland](#).

Local law enforcement should not enter into 287(g) and other agreements with immigration enforcement that make it easier to put immigrants into the deportation pipeline without due process. This last year we have seen many instances of immigration enforcement trampling on these rights. It is vital that Maryland is not complicit with the violence, fear, and chaos they bring to communities.

CLINIC hopes the bill will pass this year.

Below is a brief overview of 287(g) and the harmful effects these agreements have on communities.

Understanding 287(g) and the Harmful Impacts on Communities: A Primer

What is 287(g)?

- Under the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, [section 287\(g\)](#) allows the federal government to enter into written agreements with states to deputize local authorities in certain immigration functions.

The number of 287(g) agreements

- As of January 16, 2026, there are 1,316 agreements across the states in the U.S.
- Before 2025, there were only 134 agreements.
- Maryland went from having three counties with 287(g) agreements, to having eight: Allegany, Carroll, Cecil, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, St. Mary's, and Washington.
- This means the negative impact on our communities has been staggering.

Do states have to enter into 287(g) agreements?

- No, absolutely not. The federal law clearly states that 287(g) agreements may be carried out "to the extent consistent with State and local law."
 - The law also explicitly says, "Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to require any State or political subdivision of a State to enter into an agreement."

Have other states taken measures to prohibit or limit collaboration between state and local law enforcement and ICE when there is no judicial warrant?

- Yes. States including [California](#), [Oregon](#), [Washington](#), [Colorado](#), [Illinois](#), [Connecticut](#), [Maine](#), [New Jersey](#), [Vermont](#), and [Delaware](#), have passed laws either prohibiting 287(g) agreements, detainer requests, and/or sharing information with ICE unless as required by law.

Repercussions of 287(g) for Local Communities

Financial Costs

- Federal law states that 287(g) is to be carried out “at the expense of the State or political subdivision.”
 - That means state taxpayers are funding these programs.
 - The federal government only pays for the initial training and setup.
 - State and local law enforcement still must cover salaries and benefits, local transportation, and office issue material used in the execution of the 287(g) agreement.
- Litigation costs land on the local law enforcement agency.
 - Previously, in Maricopa County, Arizona, the [litigation costs](#) in death and abuse lawsuits accumulated up to \$43 million before the agency ended their 287(g) agreement.

Destruction of Community Trust

- 287(g) destroys community trust. By deputizing local law enforcement with immigration enforcement powers, immigrant communities see them as an extension of ICE. This, in turn, leads to a chilling effect among immigrants and refugees who become victims of crime but are too afraid to report it.
- Ensuring that everyone in our community feels safe to report crime to our local law enforcement makes us all safe.
- When local law enforcement agencies have agreements such as 287(g) or easily honor detainer requests without a signed warrant from a judge, immigrants begin to equate local police and sheriffs with immigration enforcement. The [Center for American Progress](#) noted the “pernicious effects that 287(g) programs can have on communities, as local residents lose trust in the very law enforcement agencies that are responsible for maintaining public safety.”

Erosion of Public Safety

- 287(g) redirects law enforcement from community safety to immigration policing. Officers tasked with civil immigration enforcement have less time to respond to violent crime, domestic abuse, or neighborhood threats.
- Local law enforcement ends up spending valuable time and resources on immigration enforcement rather than on prioritizing the safety of their community.

287(g) puts immigrant domestic violence survivors at risk as it deputizes local law enforcement agents to engage in immigration enforcement in their jails

- Unfortunately, abusers will often take advantage of the victim's lack of knowledge of U.S. laws. Many immigrant survivors do not speak English and if the abuser does, the abuser can craft the narrative and frame it however they wish. Abusers will make accusations against the survivors. In 287(g) jurisdictions, this means ICE is alerted to the arrest.
- Once the survivor is in jail and 287(g) activates, ICE will learn of the survivor's immigration status. This can result in the immigrant survivor being detained, having to fight their case in immigration court, or in some cases, may even be summarily deported.

Poaching of State and Local Officers into Immigration Enforcement

- ICE is currently [poaching](#) local law enforcement for immigration enforcement. Since officers in agencies with 287(g) agreements have been trained to conduct certain immigration enforcement actions, they are prime targets. ICE is currently offering sign-on bonuses from \$20-\$50,000.
- In an [article](#) by the Marshall Project, the author addressed how police chiefs and sheriffs are "trying everything they could to get and keep good officers," including offering cash incentives, lowering training and education requirements, and dropping age restrictions.
- Local law enforcement agencies should be able to focus on protecting their communities, rather than trying to compete with the federal government for officers.

Targeting Immigrants Without Criminal Convictions

- The data [shows](#) that as of Sept. 21, 2025, 71.5% of immigrant detainees have no criminal convictions. Of those who do, many were convicted of only minor offenses such as traffic violations. This means that the vast majority of immigrants who are detained were flagged to ICE and thrown into detention to be separated from their loved ones, jobs, and communities without a criminal conviction.

ICE has many other ways to detain immigrants they wish to take into custody

- ICE can go through due process and obtain a judicial warrant that is backed by probable cause.
- It is also important to note that mandatory detention exists where the law states the federal government must take someone into custody and hold them without bond if convicted of certain removable offenses.

Racial Profiling is Incentivized and Human Suffering Becomes Profit

- The United Nations at an International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination published observations that included racial profiling associated with 287(g) agreements in the United States.
- DHS recently announced reimbursement for 287(g) for those with the Task Force Model, which is the most harmful to communities since it essentially allows local law enforcement to act as ICE agents when they are conducting their work in the community.
 - This incentivizes agencies to enter into this harmful agreement.
 - The entire system is set up to target people who “appear” foreign born. This [incentivizes](#) deputies to make pretextual arrests of people who might fall into that category. Many agencies also have compensated agreements with ICE to hold immigrants in their local jails.
 - This can lead to a county’s budget being [reliant](#) on putting immigrants in jail.
 - If local law enforcement can act as ICE, and if their jail will receive money for each immigrant held, there is incentive to detain people who may be undocumented immigrants. This normally will not happen without some profiling based on visual and auditory cues.

Solution

- Prioritize public safety in your own communities by building relationships between local law enforcement and immigrants by ending 287(g) agreements.

Conclusion

At its core, this bill is about upholding Maryland’s values—fairness, dignity, and justice for all. HB 444 affirms that our state should not be in the business of tearing families apart,

undermining public trust, or funneling state and local resources into a federal deportation agenda. Instead, Maryland should stand firm in its commitment to community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law — by ending 287(g).

For these reasons, CLINIC supports House Bill 444.