



Maryland Chiefs of Police Association Maryland Sheriffs' Association



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair
and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Darren Popkin, Executive Director, MCPA-MSA Joint Legislative Committee
Andrea Mansfield, Manis, Canning & Assocs.; Representative, MCPA-MSA
Joint Legislative Committee
Samira Jackson, Manis, Canning & Assocs.; Representative, MCPA-MSA
Joint Legislative Committee

DATE: March 11, 2026

RE: **HB 1536 - Maryland Enforcement Limits and Transparency (MELT) Act**

POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association (MSA) **OPPOSE HB 1536**. MCPA and MSA represent the leadership of Maryland's state, county, and municipal law enforcement agencies responsible for protecting communities across the State. Our members are committed to public safety while maintaining strong relationships with the communities they serve.

House Bill 1536 would significantly restrict voluntary cooperation between state and local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities while also establishing reporting requirements and civil liability provisions related to such cooperation. While the bill is framed as a transparency measure, it would create operational confusion and unnecessary legal risk for law enforcement agencies carrying out their public safety responsibilities.

Maryland law enforcement agencies routinely work with federal partners, including the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Marshals Service. These partnerships are longstanding and are essential to addressing criminal activity that crosses jurisdictional lines, including violent crime, gang activity, narcotics trafficking, and human trafficking. These cooperative efforts focus on public safety and criminal enforcement, not civil immigration enforcement.

Currently, law enforcement agencies across Maryland continue to communicate with federal authorities through standard law enforcement channels when necessary to address criminal activity. House Bill 1536 risks creating uncertainty for officers regarding what communication or coordination could expose them or their agencies to legal liability. That uncertainty may

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discourage routine information sharing that is critical to addressing serious crime and protecting the public.

The bill also raises significant operational concerns. Its broad prohibition on voluntary assistance combined with the authorization of civil actions for alleged violations creates the potential for litigation against officers and agencies for routine law enforcement communication with federal partners. The lack of clear definitions could force officers to make legal judgments in real time during active investigations, which is neither practical nor appropriate for public safety operations.

In addition, the bill raises constitutional concerns related to federal supremacy and interference with federal law enforcement functions. Immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility, and policies that penalize communication or cooperation with federal authorities may raise questions related to federal preemption and the ability of federal agencies to carry out their lawful duties.

Maryland law enforcement leaders remain committed to protecting civil rights, maintaining community trust, and ensuring public safety for all residents. However, House Bill 1536 creates barriers that could discourage legitimate cooperation between local, state, and federal law enforcement partners and introduce unnecessary legal risk for officers performing their duties.

For these reasons, MCPA and MSA **OPPOSE HB 1536** and respectfully urge an **UNFAVORABLE** Committee report.