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Ruth Bahl
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TESTIMONY ON HB0444 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition

TO: Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Ruth Bahl

My name is Ruth Bahl. I am a resident of District 7. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0444, Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition.

I work in the department of education for a Maryland public university, and I regularly work with students, faculty, and staff of all backgrounds. I directly work with high school students from local schools and current students with programs focused on getting them resources to succeed and have longevity in the career field of teaching. As an educating professional, a friend, educator and mentor, neighbor and community member to immigrants, natural born citizens, and all above affected by ICE, I stand in firm agreement that this bill should be passed.

I am passionate about passing this bill because I have friends, coworkers, neighbors, students, and community members who are affected by ICE or afraid of ICE even if they are U.S. citizens or have valid U.S. visas. No one regardless of immigration status should feel afraid to go outside, to get groceries, or even walk down the street due to being targeted or detained especially in a forceful manner by ICE. As an educator, I get to work with students of all backgrounds and coworkers of all backgrounds. All the students I meet are eager to help teach the next generation and instill a passion in them to learn. Everyone that I personally know who is an immigrant, child of an immigrant, holding a valid US visa, or has loved ones or family that are immigrants are passionate, intelligent, hardworking people, and deserve the same respect and dignity as fellow human beings. Children especially should not have to worry about being taken forcefully from school and used as props to lure their parents out of their house. I am confident that this bill being enacted will ease some of the pressure and intense fear that folks experience if law enforcement is banned on a statewide level from making agreements or contracts with immigration enforcement. Naturally as an educator, I am passionate about the welfare and mental health of students who I meet on a day-to-day basis. This bill will ensure that we are not increasing ICE efforts in Maryland as we need to protect students and their families, citizen or immigrant from fear and instability. Everyone deserves to be able to have their families intact and students should only have midterms and finals as their big stressors. I am confident that this bill is one of the first steps to prevent an even larger mental burden on students and their families in Maryland.

I am confident Maryland can come together as a community and as the state with the biggest heart and protect our people from further harm. I think HB0444 will be very effective in protecting all in Maryland from fear of being detained and I believe this bill will prevent further harm to families and students. I **respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0444.**