



Council on American-Islamic Relations

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Chair Sandy Bartlett
House Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony In Support of HB444 Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements - Prohibition

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Maryland office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) in support of *House Bill 444* which would prohibit the State and local governments from entering into immigration enforcement agreements and require the termination of any existing agreements by July 1, 2026. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

Thousands of immigrant, refugee, and mixed-status families from diverse backgrounds live, work, and raise children in communities across Maryland. For these communities, HB 444 is not an abstract policy debate - it is a critical public safety measure.

Effective public safety depends on trust between residents and law enforcement. Immigration enforcement agreements undermine that trust. When local law enforcement agencies are perceived as extensions of federal immigration authorities, immigrant communities become less likely to report crimes, serve as witnesses, or cooperate with investigations.

Victims of domestic violence, hate crimes, wage theft, and sexual assault are particularly affected. Fear that contact with police could lead to detention or deportation often prevents individuals from seeking help – even when their lives are at risk. HB 444 helps restore confidence that local law enforcement exists to protect public safety, not to enforce civil immigration law.

This trust is not theoretical. Law enforcement leaders across the country have repeatedly emphasized that cooperation from immigrant communities is essential to solving crimes and keeping neighborhoods safe. HB 444 aligns Maryland law with these well-established public safety principles.

Immigration enforcement agreements blur the lines between federal civil immigration law and state and local policing. These agreements divert limited local resources away from their core mission and place officers in roles they are not trained - or authorized - to perform.

Immigration law is complex and constantly changing. When local officers are tasked with enforcing it, the risk of constitutional violations increases, including unlawful detention, racial profiling, and due process failures. HB 444 appropriately clarifies that immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility and that Maryland's local agencies should focus on keeping communities safe.

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Immigration enforcement partnerships have led to discriminatory practices, particularly against communities of color. These practices erode constitutional protections and disproportionately harm communities already vulnerable to profiling and surveillance.

HB 444 helps ensure that individuals are not questioned, detained, or targeted based on perceived immigration status, religion, ethnicity, or national origin. By prohibiting these agreements, the bill reinforces Maryland's commitment to equal protection under the law.

Maryland has long recognized that inclusive policies strengthen communities. HB 444 continues that tradition by ensuring that public safety strategies do not isolate or endanger large segments of the population.

Importantly, HB 444 does not interfere with federal immigration enforcement. It simply ensures that state and local governments are not conscripted into civil immigration enforcement roles that undermine safety, accountability, and trust.

HB 444 is a measured, responsible public safety bill. It protects civil liberties, clarifies the role of local law enforcement, and helps ensure that all Maryland residents - regardless of immigration status - can report crimes, seek help, and participate in civic life without fear.

For these reasons, CAIR Maryland respectfully urges a **favorable report on HB 444**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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