

Testimony on House Bill 444 – Favorable

HB444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition

House Judiciary Committee

January 27, 2026

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

My name is Kathryn Burke, and I am a resident of Anne Arundel County, Maryland. I am writing in support of HB444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition.

The way U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents have been conducting themselves over the past year has been exceedingly violent, factually inaccurate, and blatantly cruel and unjust. Immigrants Maryland communities, whether documented or undocumented, are my neighbors, and I don't want to see them (or anyone) treated in the way ICE agents are treating people who get in their way. Immigration enforcement agreements like 287(g) would degrade our state and local law enforcement agencies by implicating them in the kind of violence and cruelty we've seen perpetrated by ICE agents recently, and I don't want that for our state. I think we can and should be better than that.

I support HB444 because immigration enforcement agreements like 287(g) create fear in immigrant communities and undermine public safety for everyone. When people fear contact with law enforcement, they are less likely to report crimes, seek help, or cooperate as witnesses—even when they are victims. Certainly they have no incentive to trust law enforcement under these conditions, and I don't blame them for it.

The increased ICE presence in Annapolis in recent weeks has filled me with dread, and watching unknown masked men with weapons detain people with no explanation is dystopian. (I did not witness anyone being detained in person, but seeing videos circling on social media and recognizing the places where folks are being detained is horrible. I can't imagine that anyone witnessing this in person would feel safe around law enforcement or trust that they could receive help from them – I don't, and I only saw videos.)

Programs like 287(g) have been associated with racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detention. They divert local resources away from protecting communities and instead entangle local agencies in federal deportation efforts that separate families and destabilize neighborhoods. None of this is good for our communities. I would like to believe that, when in need, I could seek help from local law enforcement, and prohibiting 287(g) agreements would shore up some trust that Maryland law enforcement agencies will refuse to act recklessly or cruelly even when others are doing so elsewhere in the country.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 444.

Thank you for your time and consideration.