

Testimony in Support of House Bill 332
Joint Committee on Judiciary
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Submitted by: Brendan Murray
Position: SUPPORT

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to testify in support of House Bill 332. In recent weeks, as the new administration has taken office, we have seen a dramatic escalation in immigration enforcement across Maryland. ICE agents are conducting enforcement actions in our courthouses, our schools, and our neighborhoods—and in too many cases, they are doing so with a troubling lack of accountability.

The message from Washington is clear: federal agents are being told to enforce the law aggressively, with fewer checks and less oversight. But what happens when they cross the line? What happens when an ICE agent detains a U.S. citizen by mistake, enters a home without a warrant, or uses excessive force during an arrest? Under current Maryland law, that victim has no clear path to justice in our state courts.

HB 332 fixes that. It establishes a civil cause of action against any individual who, under color of law, deprives another of a right secured by the U.S. Constitution. That means if a federal agent—whether ICE, FBI, or DEA—violates someone's constitutional rights while acting in Maryland, that victim can bring them to court here, in their own community.

This is not hypothetical. Since the beginning of this administration, we have heard reports of ICE operations that appear to prioritize speed over due process. We have seen families terrified that a routine traffic stop could lead to a loved one being swept into federal custody with no explanation. We have seen local law enforcement asked to cooperate with federal agents, but with no clear mechanism for holding those federal agents accountable when they overstep.

HB 332 does not interfere with legitimate federal enforcement. It does not prevent ICE from doing its job. What it does is say: if you wear a badge in Maryland, you are not above the Constitution. You are not above the law.

The bill is carefully crafted. It applies only to individuals, not government entities. It preserves the same immunities available under federal law, including qualified immunity. It protects judicial officers from frivolous suits. It simply ensures that when a federal agent deprives someone of their constitutional rights, that person has a day in court.

We are at a moment when federal power is being tested, and when communities across Maryland are looking to us for reassurance that their rights matter. Passing HB 332 sends a clear message: in Maryland, accountability is not optional—not even for federal agents.

I urge a favorable report.

Thank you.

Brendan Murray