



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 1536: Maryland Enforcement Limits and Transparency (MELT) Act

Summary: House Bill 1536, the *Maryland Enforcement Limits and Transparency (MELT) Act*, ensures that Maryland's involvement in federal civil immigration enforcement is limited, transparent, and grounded in constitutional due process. The bill establishes a clear standard: Maryland-regulated actors, whether public agencies, licensed professionals including landlords and employers, or state contractors, may not participate in federal civil immigration enforcement without a judicial warrant signed by a judge. It protects sensitive personal information held by state agencies, establishes professional standards for licensed individuals, creates accountability for state contractors, and provides civil remedies for people harmed by unlawful cooperation. At its core, the MELT Act ensures that Maryland resources and institutions are never used to facilitate unconstitutional actions that undermine civil liberties or destabilize families and communities.

Background: Maryland is proud of its diversity and the strength of its immigrant communities. Immigrants contribute profoundly to our state's economy, culture, and civic life, and the promise of opportunity, the American Dream, has long been part of Maryland's identity. But recent federal immigration enforcement practices have raised serious constitutional concerns that affect communities across the country.

[Federal immigration enforcement often relies on administrative warrants](#), which are issued internally by immigration officials rather than by a judge. These documents differ fundamentally from judicial warrants: they are not reviewed by a neutral magistrate and historically have not authorized entry into homes or private spaces without consent. [Legal experts and federal courts have emphasized](#) that the Fourth Amendment requires warrants to be issued by a neutral judge precisely to prevent unreasonable searches and seizures and to ensure independent oversight of law enforcement actions. Administrative immigration warrants lack this independent judicial review.

Recent federal policy shifts have intensified concerns. In 2025, national immigration authorities issued internal guidance allowing agents to rely on administrative warrants to enter homes during



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enforcement actions, an approach that [many constitutional scholars argue conflicts](#) with long-standing Fourth Amendment protections.

Courts have also repeatedly found that cooperation with immigration detainers or administrative warrants can expose state and local actors to constitutional liability. [Several courts have held](#) that detaining individuals based solely on such requests may violate the Fourth Amendment and can lead to damages for unlawful detention or false imprisonment.

When state actors, contractors, or professionals participate in immigration enforcement without clear legal standards, they may unintentionally become involved in actions that violate constitutional rights, separate families, or erode trust between communities and public institutions. Maryland has both the authority and the responsibility to ensure that state-regulated actors operate within clear constitutional boundaries.

Bill Explanation: House Bill 1536 establishes clear guardrails to ensure that Maryland-controlled actors do not participate in unconstitutional immigration enforcement.

First, the bill creates a simple rule: no participation in federal civil immigration enforcement without a judicial warrant signed by a judge. Maryland-regulated actors, including public agencies, contractors, property owners, and licensed professionals, must verify that a judge has issued a valid warrant before assisting in enforcement actions. If participation occurs without such judicial authorization, those actors may face state penalties.

Second, the MELT Act protects personal information held by state agencies. The bill prohibits agencies from sharing personal data with federal immigration authorities unless a judicial warrant authorizes that disclosure. This provision ensures that sensitive information collected for public services, such as health care, education, or licensing, cannot be used in ways that undermine constitutional protections.

Third, the bill establishes clear professional standards. Maryland-licensed professionals, including doctors, attorneys, and security personnel, must decline to participate in immigration enforcement activities that lack a judicial warrant. If a professional knowingly assists in enforcement without lawful authorization, they may face disciplinary action from their licensing authority. Professionals who are acting on behalf of a Maryland resident solely to assist that individual, such as providing legal counsel, medical care, or other supportive services, are not subject to the restrictions of this bill. The MELT Act is carefully tailored to address participation



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in immigration enforcement activities that may violate civil rights, and it does not apply to professionals whose role is to support or protect the interests of the Maryland resident involved.

Fourth, the legislation ensures accountability for state contractors. Private companies that contract with the State must comply with these constitutional standards. Contractors that violate the law may face contract termination, denial of renewal, or additional compliance requirements imposed by the Board of Public Works.

Fifth, the MELT Act creates a civil remedy for individuals harmed by unlawful cooperation. If a person's civil rights are violated because a non-federal actor participated in immigration enforcement without judicial authorization, that individual may bring a civil action against those responsible. This includes subcontractors, property owners who allow unlawful enforcement activities on their premises, and other participating actors.

Importantly, the bill is carefully focused on Maryland-controlled actors, not federal authorities. It does not interfere with federal enforcement itself, and it does not prevent professionals, such as doctors or nurses, from providing care to detained individuals. Instead, it simply ensures that participation in enforcement activities by Maryland-regulated actors occurs only when constitutional safeguards are in place.

How Enforcement Works

The MELT Act provides a balanced and legally grounded accountability structure. Enforcement occurs only after a court determines that an individual's civil liberties, such as protection against unlawful detention, false imprisonment, or unconstitutional search and seizure, have been violated. Once a violation is confirmed, the affected individual or the State of Maryland, through the Attorney General, may pursue civil remedies against non-federal actors who participated in the unlawful activity.

This structure ensures that the law operates with appropriate judicial oversight and protects both individual rights and institutional integrity.

Why This Matters

The stakes are significant. When immigration enforcement occurs without proper safeguards, it can destabilize families, undermine public trust, and expose state actors to constitutional liability. The distinction between administrative warrants and judicial warrants exists precisely to ensure



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that law enforcement actions are subject to independent review by a judge before individuals' homes, property, or liberty are affected.

By requiring judicial authorization, clarifying professional and contractor obligations, and creating transparent accountability mechanisms, the MELT Act protects immigrant communities while reinforcing the constitutional principles that protect everyone.

Maryland's values are rooted in fairness, due process, and respect for the rule of law. House Bill 1536 ensures that our state institutions reflect those values. It protects Maryland residents from unconstitutional enforcement practices, ensures that state resources are used responsibly, and strengthens trust between communities and public institutions.

Conclusion: The Maryland Enforcement Limits and Transparency (MELT) Act establishes a clear, constitutionally grounded framework for how Maryland-regulated actors interact with federal immigration enforcement. By requiring judicial warrants, protecting personal data, setting professional standards, and ensuring accountability when rights are violated, the bill safeguards civil liberties while providing clarity for agencies, professionals, and contractors.

Maryland can celebrate its diversity while upholding the rule of law. House Bill 1536 does both.

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