

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable

HB309 Judicial Facilities – Stops, Detentions, and Arrests – Limitations

House Judiciary Committee

February 2, 2026

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

I, William Bruce Cottle, am writing to offer favorable testimony in support of HB309 – Judicial Facilities – Stops, Detentions, and Arrests – Limitations

A day after President Donald Trump took office, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) issued a new directive to its agents: Arrests at courthouses, restricted under the Biden administration, were again permissible. This directive prevents immigrants from attending court hearings, required immigration court proceedings or check-ins with Immigration and Customs Enforcement that they had attended for decades.

- The administration's policy has forced immigrants to choose between attending mandatory hearings and risking arrest or missing court and facing an automatic deportation order. This untenable choice has led to a surge in absenteeism, undermining the integrity of the entire immigration court system.
- HB 309 will Prohibit a person from being stopped, detained, or arrested for certain civil offenses while the individual is in a judicial facility or is traveling within 1 mile of a judicial facility for the purpose of attending a meeting, a hearing, or another official proceeding in the Judicial facility except under certain circumstances; establishing that evidence obtained in violation of the Act is inadmissible in a proceeding over which a state court or State or local agency has jurisdiction; etc.
- Arrests in and around any court including family, traffic, immigration and criminal courts, create a "chilling effect" that undermines the justice system by discouraging victims and witnesses from attending.

More importantly, this new practice by ICE is **clearly unconstitutional** because numerous US citizens have been stopped, assaulted, and detained **without cause or a judicial warrant**. Further, many/most of the ICE agents are covering their faces and do not display their identify, **precluding personal accountability for their illegal actions**.

Other states are filing or have passed similar legislation similar to HB 309. HB 309 will protect the rights of all residents and support the integrity of our judicial system.

I **strongly** urge you to vote in favor of this bill.

Sincerely, William Bruce Cottle, 1502 Florence Rd, Mt Airy, MD 21771