

Date of Hearing: Tuesday, 1/27 at 2:00 PM

Gnora Mahs, DrPH
Baltimore City, Maryland 21224

TESTIMONY ON HB444 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements - Prohibition.

TO: Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee
FROM: Gnora Mahs

My name is Gnora Mahs. I am a resident of District 46. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB444, Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements - Prohibition.

I live in the Highlandtown neighborhood, am a member of Hinenu synagogue, am a public health professional, and a frequent visitor of Patterson Park with my dog, Juniper. Living in the Highland town community, I have seen how fear has infiltrated our city. When I first moved to the area, there were frequent cookouts in the park, large latino festivals, large volleyball tournaments or soccer matches, and tons of family gatherings hosted by my neighbors. I have sadly watched all of these activities shrink or disappear in just the last year. One of the reasons I was so excited to settle down and buy a house in Highlandtown was because of the welcoming environment and the lively community park. I want my neighbors to feel welcome, regardless of the color of their skin, their country of origin, or their immigration status.

My family came here through the immigration process less than 100 years ago. They fled from countries that were persecuting us because of religion and cultural backgrounds. We were able to create a life in the United States, gain citizenship, start small businesses, create a family, and build community. This is what all people who are coming to the US are in search of, safety, community, acceptance, the chance to have a better life.

287g contracts enable police to terrorize people who are just looking for a better life. Immigrant community members live in fear of going to school, work, or to worship. Fear that if they are stopped en route, they may not make it back home. There is also the fear that calls for help could end in detention. 287g contracts increase the violent victimization of immigrant communities, and have a chilling effect on crime reporting including domestic violence and human trafficking– for fear of deportation.

My Jewish values demand that I see my freedom as deeply connected to my neighbors', for we cannot be free until we all are free. Banning 287g contracts is a step toward freedom for Marylanders. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB444.**