



**Testimony on House Bill 444 – Favorable
SB 245 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition
House Judiciary Committee**

January 27, 2026

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

Shore Progress offers favorable testimony in support of HB 444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition.

Shore Progress is a nonpartisan progressive organization that has worked across all nine counties of Maryland's Eastern Shore for the past nine years. Our mission is to promote justice, strengthen democracy, and support working families through community organizing, policy advocacy, and civic engagement. We work closely with immigrant communities throughout the Shore, particularly in Salisbury and surrounding areas, which is home to one of the largest Haitian populations in the entire country. Our organization regularly engages residents, faith leaders, advocates, and service providers who are directly impacted by immigration enforcement practices.

At its core, **HB 444** is about upholding Maryland's values - fairness, dignity, and justice for all. This bill affirms that our state should not be in the business of tearing families apart, undermining public trust, or diverting state and local resources into federal immigration enforcement. Instead, Maryland should remain focused on community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law by prohibiting immigration enforcement agreements such as 287(g).

The harm caused by these enforcement agreements is not abstract. It is real, local, and devastating. On the Eastern Shore, we have seen families and communities traumatized by ICE actions that have nothing to do with public safety.

In Easton, Pastor Daniel Fuentes Espinal, who leads Iglesia del Nazareno Jesús Te Ama and had lived in the United States for 24 years, was pulled from his vehicle during a routine traffic stop and detained by ICE for weeks.

Arlit Maria Martinez, a 41-year-old mother of four, was detained by ICE on her way to work. While she was in custody, her 15-year-old son Kevin was dying of cancer. Two days after her arrest, Kevin passed away just before his 16th birthday. His mother, still detained by ICE, was never given the chance to say goodbye. Right now in Salisbury, **Rigo Mendoza-Lopez is mourning the loss of his wife and son, another family shattered by ICE's actions.**

A 24-year-old Salisbury mother, Vanessa Parrazal, was dragged from her car by ICE officers just after dropping her child off at school. Officers smashed her window and forcibly removed her from the vehicle in full view of the school.

These incidents have occurred alongside ongoing community opposition to immigration enforcement agreements. Despite massive public pushback, an ICE agreement was signed on January 23. This comes after an effort to pass a 287G agreement stalled at the County Council level amid massive community pushback. This decision has further eroded trust between local government, law enforcement, and immigrant residents who already live in fear of interacting with public institutions. It has shown that county governments like Wicomico are unequipped to listen to the people they represent and to address issues as serious as federal immigration enforcement.

The 287(g) program has a documented history of racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detention. It diverts local law enforcement away from their primary role of protecting public safety and erodes trust between law enforcement and immigrant communities. When trust is broken, community safety suffers. These practices directly undermine Shore Progress's mission by creating fear, isolation, and barriers to civic participation among the people we serve.

For these reasons, **Shore Progress** urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a **favorable report on HB444**.