

Testimony on House Bill 444 – Favorable
HB444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition

House Judiciary Committee

January 27, 2026

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

My name is Gretchen Tome, and I am a resident of Baltimore, Maryland. I am writing in support of **HB444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition**.

As a School Social Worker, I have seen the impact of fear and trauma among students and colleagues. Students are worried for themselves, their families, and their friends - and the same is true among staff at my school. We are all directly or indirectly impacted. This increased level of stress and fear impacts learning, relationships, physical health, and mental health. While I am inspired by the ways that our students are speaking up and our staff are organizing, we could be using this time and energy in so many other ways.

I support **HB444** because immigration enforcement agreements like 287(g) create fear in immigrant communities and undermine public safety for everyone. When people fear contact with law enforcement, they are less likely to report crimes, seek help, or cooperate as witnesses—even when they are victims.

Here in Maryland, Tiago Alexandre Sousa-Martins was shot by ICE agents on Christmas Eve. We have had reports in both Baltimore City and County of ICE agents posing as other law enforcement officials in order to trick people. I have personally witnessed ICE agents in Baltimore in unmarked cars with dark tinted windows and improper license plates, driving the wrong way on one-way streets as they patrol a neighborhood. This violence, deceitfulness, and unlawful activity causes fear in our communities.

Programs like 287(g) have been associated with racial profiling, discrimination, and wrongful detention. They divert local resources away from protecting communities and instead entangle local agencies in federal deportation efforts that separate families and destabilize neighborhoods.

Given that Baltimore already deals with unconstitutional policing and lack of trust between law enforcement and the community, we must do all that we can to repair the harm that's been done and rebuild safety and trust. These agreements do the exact opposite.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a **favorable report** on **HB 444**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Gretchen M. Tome, Baltimore, MD 21213 District 45