

Subject: Support HB 444 – Protect Maryland Communities from Harmful ICE Entanglement

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 444, which would prohibit state and local agencies from entering into immigration enforcement agreements and require existing agreements to be terminated by July 1, 2026.

Recent events in Wicomico County make clear why this legislation is urgently needed. Over the past year, residents across Wicomico—spanning party lines and communities—organized, testified, and worked with county leaders to oppose entering into a 287(g) agreement with ICE. That advocacy resulted in bipartisan opposition on the County Council, reflecting the clear will of the community to reject policies that entangle local law enforcement in federal immigration enforcement.

Despite this overwhelming public opposition, the County Executive and Sheriff have moved forward with a Warrant Service Officer agreement, directly contradicting the voices of residents, advocates, faith leaders, and local officials who stood up for community safety and trust. This decision underscores a fundamental problem: without clear statewide protections, individual officials can override community will and expose residents to harm.

HB 444 provides the clarity and consistency Maryland needs. Immigration enforcement agreements like 287(g) undermine trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. When people fear that calling the police could lead to detention or deportation, crimes go unreported, victims stay silent, and entire communities are made less safe. Public safety depends on trust—and trust cannot exist when local law enforcement is used as an extension of federal immigration enforcement.

Maryland has an opportunity to choose a different path. We can affirm that our state values dignity, due process, and community safety. We can ensure that local tax dollars are used to meet local needs, not to advance federal deportation agendas. And we can send a clear message that all Marylanders deserve to feel safe in their neighborhoods, regardless of immigration status.

I urge you to support HB 444 and help ensure that Maryland remains a place where communities come first, the rule of law is respected, and public safety is built on trust—not fear.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kenson Raymond

Community Advocate & Immigration Representative