

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable
HB 444 – 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 Lori Firestone and I am a therapist now living and working in Baltimore, Maryland. I am writing in support of **HB 444 – Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition**.

I am a licensed clinical social worker with over 25 years of experience working in both community settings and as a therapist in private practice. My professional expertise includes depression, anxiety, trauma- including vicarious trauma, and community-level trauma.

Clinical research and long-standing evidence in the fields of psychology, social work, and public health demonstrate that exposure to aggressive or violent law enforcement activity—whether directly, as a bystander, or through repeated media exposure—can result in trauma-related symptoms including anxiety, hypervigilance, sleep disturbance, and impaired functioning. These effects are not limited to the individuals directly involved but extend to families, children, and entire communities.

A key public safety concern associated with 287(g) agreements is the erosion of trust in local law enforcement. Decades of policing and public health research show that community trust is essential to effective public safety. When local law enforcement is perceived as an extension of federal immigration enforcement, community members—particularly in immigrant and mixed-status communities—are less likely to report crimes, seek assistance, or cooperate as witnesses, even when they are victims. This undermines crime prevention, investigation, and overall community safety.

From both a clinical and public safety perspective, 287(g) agreements contribute to community-wide fear, psychological harm, and reduced cooperation with law enforcement, while diverting local resources away from core public safety functions.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 444. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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