

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

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

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

Maryland law grants police officers broad **authority to enforce state and local laws**, conduct investigations, and maintain public order. This authority is primarily derived from the Maryland Code, Public Safety Article 3-201. Just for clarification, there is no mention of enforcing federal laws, such as immigration enforcement. Consider these two sections:

“(d) (1) “Law enforcement agency” means a governmental police force, sheriff’s office, or security force or law enforcement organization of the State, a county, or a municipal corporation that by statute, ordinance, or common law is **authorized to enforce the general criminal laws of the State.**” (Emphasis added).

“(f) (1) “Police officer” means an individual who: (i) is **authorized to enforce the general criminal laws of the State.**” (Emphasis added).

I have family in multiple Maryland communities and I want them to stay safe. I strongly believe that our law enforcement officers should use their time and resources wisely by enforcing Maryland laws, not cooperating with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. ICE, with its calendar/fiscal 2025 budget between \$28.7 billion -- \$29.9 billion is overflowing with resources. And 2026 will also be a year in which they are likely to be flush. It is irrational and unwise to further support them by taking our law enforcement officers away from the duties they are legally obligated to perform.

In addition, I support **HB444** because immigration enforcement agreements like 287(g) create barriers for law enforcement officers to even learn about crimes that have been committed as well as challenges to conducting investigations and solving crimes. When people fear contact with law enforcement, they are less likely to report crimes or cooperate as witnesses. This does not keep anyone, but real criminals, safe.

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.

287(g) makes Marylanders less safe and contributes to the awful fantasy that all immigrants are criminals. Data show that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans. So focus attention on what matters to most Marylanders and ban all 287(g) agreements with ICE along with any other collaborations with ICE.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a **favorable report on HB44**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Linda Girdner

941 Fall Ridge Way

Gambrills, MD 21054