

January 23, 2025

Melissa Coretz Goemann
Silver Spring, MD 20901

TESTIMONY ON HB444; POSITION: FAVORABLE
Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements - Prohibition

TO: Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Melissa Coretz Goemann

My name is Melissa Coretz Goemann and I am a resident of District 20. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB444, Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements - Prohibition.

My family and I have lived in Silver Spring for over a decade and are active members of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation. As the daughter of an immigrant, protections for our immigrant neighbors are of the utmost importance to me. My mother and her family came here as refugees from Czechoslovakia in the 1940s to escape the Nazis. My mother was only twelve years old at the time and she and her family spoke no English. With the help of a supportive community, she was able to surmount this challenge, graduate from college, and have a long career as an elementary school teacher. My mother has always been grateful to this country for the opportunity to survive and thrive. That opportunity is why so many immigrants have come to the United States.

Scripture teaches us that when strangers reside within our land we must not harm them; we must love the stranger as we love ourselves, because we were once strangers in the land of Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-34). All people should be able to live in this state (and country) in safety and without fear. But fear is stoked in the immigrant community when we allow the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to create agreements (known as 287(g) agreements) with local law enforcement to deputize local police to act as ICE agents. These agreements enable law enforcement to detain people based only on their immigration status. 287(g) agreements have made Black and Brown communities, in particular, the targets of racial profiling and egregious brutality by ICE and the local police that work with them.

By voting in favor of HB444, we can keep Maryland law enforcement from working with ICE to stoke fear in our immigrant neighbors and assault and terrorize them. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB444.**