

February 25, 2026

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TESTIMONY ON HBI 575: FAVORABLE

**Correctional Services and Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement – Prohibitions
(Community Trust Act)**

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

FROM: Rabbi Ruth Smith, on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ)

Hene ma tov, u ma naim – how good it is for us to come together, to stand with the Maryland General Assembly as you work to pass this legislation to stand up against the dangerous policies of our federal government that is working overtime to overturn everything that makes this country great while making our streets less safe.

My name is Rabbi Ruth Smith. I am a resident of District 43. **I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ) in support of HB 1575, the Community Trust Act.** JUFJ organizes over 6,000 Jews and allies from across Maryland in support of social, racial, and economic justice campaigns at the state and local levels.

Just recently, in synagogues all across the world, Jews were reading the story of slavery in Egypt. Each year when we retell these stories, we hear the groans of our ancestors as they reverberate across the millennia. We know what it was like to be strangers in a strange land. Over the generations we emigrated, becoming strangers time and time again. There is a Biblical Hebrew word for someone who comes from away to live and work in community: that word is *Ger*. Torah understands the human tendency to be distrustful of *gerim*, of people from away. That's why the torah teaches:

וְגֵר לֹא תִלְחָץ

Don't oppress the one who has come to live among you

וְאַתֶּם יָדַעְתֶּם אֶת־נַפְשׁ הַגֵּר

Because you know the soul of the *ger*

כִּי־גֵרִים הֵייתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

Because you were *gerim* in the land of egypt

Torah wants us to recognize *gerim* in ourselves and to do better than what was done to us and our ancestors. That is why this command is repeated 36 times throughout the Torah, the

most any one command is repeated. **Gerim**, by virtue of coming and living among us, become our neighbors and we are instructed: **וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ v'ahvta l'reahcha c'mocha**, (Leviticus 19:18) to love your neighbor as yourself.

JUFJ is proud to work alongside our partners to fight for the Community Trust Act as it upholds the Jewish value of protecting **Gerim**. Building on the success of banning 287(g) agreements in Maryland, passing this legislation is a critical way that our state can strike out against the immoral and most likely unconstitutional policies of the current corrupt federal administration.

On behalf of JUFJ, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1575.