



Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Prince George's County

January 26, 2026

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 444

Public Safety – Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition House Judiciary Committee

**Chair Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett
House Judiciary Committee**

Maryland General Assembly

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Prince George's County (HCCPG), we respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 444 (HB 444). We encourage all members of the General Assembly to vote this bill into law, as it has significant implications for public safety, constitutional governance, economic stability, and the well-being of all Marylanders.

HB 444 would prohibit the State of Maryland, its political subdivisions, county sheriffs, and local government agencies from entering into or maintaining immigration enforcement agreements that authorize the enforcement of civil immigration law, and would require the termination of any such agreements by July 1, 2026. This bill appropriately affirms that civil immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility, not a function of state or local government.

Public Safety and Community Trust

HB 444 advances public safety by ensuring that state and local law enforcement agencies remain focused on their core mission: protecting communities and enforcing criminal law. When local jurisdictions enter into immigration enforcement agreements, trust between residents and law enforcement is compromised. Community members become afraid to report crimes, cooperate with investigations, or serve as witnesses—making neighborhoods less safe for everyone.



The bill's prohibition on these agreements is consistent with the reality that civil immigration enforcement does not require local participation and that such participation often undermines effective policing and community-centered public safety strategies.

Due Process and Constitutional Protections

HCCPG is deeply concerned about enforcement practices associated with immigration enforcement agreements that bypass traditional judicial safeguards. As outlined in the policy analysis accompanying HB 444, immigration detainers and administrative warrants are issued by federal agencies and are not reviewed by a court. These practices raise serious constitutional concerns related to due process and unlawful detention.

HB 444 ensures that Maryland does not entangle itself in enforcement actions that risk violating constitutional rights or exposing local jurisdictions to legal liability.

Accountability Through Lawful Means

Supporting HB 444 does not excuse criminal behavior. Individuals who commit crimes—regardless of immigration status—should be held accountable through lawful arrest, prosecution, and judicial process. HB 444 simply ensures that accountability occurs within constitutional and statutory boundaries, rather than through civil immigration enforcement mechanisms that operate outside the judicial system.

Economic Impact on Maryland

Immigrants are essential contributors to Maryland's economy—as workers, entrepreneurs, employers, and consumers. Policies that create fear and instability in immigrant communities result in lost productivity, labor shortages, and economic disruption. Small businesses suffer when workers are detained without notice, families are destabilized, and entire communities disengage from economic activity.

Prince George's County and the State of Maryland rely heavily on immigrant labor and immigrant-owned businesses. HB 444 promotes economic stability by ensuring that state and local policies do not inadvertently undermine workforce participation or small business continuity.



Impact on Children and Education

Fear of immigration enforcement has a chilling effect on children and families. Parents are increasingly hesitant to send children to school, attend school functions, or access essential services. This fear undermines educational attainment, child welfare, and long-term economic mobility—outcomes that affect not only immigrant families, but the future of Maryland as a whole.

A Policy That Impacts All Marylanders

HB 444 is not solely an immigration bill; it is a public safety, economic, and constitutional policy that impacts every Maryland resident. By clearly delineating the roles of federal versus state and local government, HB 444 strengthens governance, protects civil liberties, and promotes safer, more stable communities.

For these reasons, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Prince George's County strongly urges a favorable report on HB 444 and encourages all legislators to vote this bill into law.

Thank you for your leadership, your commitment to justice, and your dedication to the well-being of all Marylanders.

Respectfully submitted,

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