



**Testimony in SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT of SB 810  
Immigration Enforcement - Expanding Sensitive Locations, Notification, and Guidance  
(Maryland Values Act of 2026)**

Judiciary Committee  
April 1, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Bartlett and Members of the Committee,

We Are CASA is a national powerhouse organization building power and improving the quality of life in working-class: Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities. With a membership of over 190,000 members, CASA creates change with its power-building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. We provide multiple education services to youth and adult immigrants in Maryland including college and career readiness, workforce and life skills ESOL, and vocational training.

**We Are CASA is pleased to offer favorable testimony with amendment in strong support of SB 810, Immigration Enforcement - Expanding Sensitive Locations, Notification, and Guidance (Maryland Values Act of 2026).** Senate Bill 810 strengthens student protections against unlawful immigration enforcement activities. It also serves as a critical step towards restoring community trust in our public school system, trust which has been undermined by the unjust targeting of Black and brown students and their families for deportation.

In January 2025, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) rescinded its long-standing "sensitive locations" policy and has since conducted immigration enforcement on school campuses across the country<sup>1</sup>. In response to DHS' rescission, the General Assembly passed the Maryland Values Act and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) issued updated guidance on student protections. Despite these actions, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) across the state have interpreted state law in widely varying ways and, on occasion, have created local policy that contradicts both the letter and the spirit of the law. Because of this, CASA respectfully requests that the General Assembly again exercises its leadership to clarify our Maryland values and provide explicit guardrails to protect our students from the aggressive and racially motivated deportation machine.

Across the country and right here in Maryland, masked agents have been abducting our Black and brown neighbors as they commute to work and take their children to school. Many students

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.k12dive.com/news/ice-activity-on-k-12-school-grounds/810648/>

now feel that they must sacrifice their education to prevent family separation. Others continue to attend class while enduring chronic stress and lack of focus caused by the palpable fear that they or their classmates' lives could be completely shattered in the blink of an eye. During the 2024-2025 school year, student enrollment declined across the state of Maryland<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, chronic absenteeism rates increased and graduation rates decreased for Latino students and for Multilingual students. The State Superintendent has indicated that if action is not taken to address these inequities, we will only see greater disparities reported for the 2025-2026 school year.

Senate Bill 810 as currently amended demonstrates the state's commitment to equitable, high-quality education for all Maryland youth. **However, two critical amendments are needed to ensure the physical safety and emotional wellbeing of all students.**

- **Shelter in Place:** In schools across the country, “shelter in place” is used as a protective measure where there is severe weather, hazardous materials, or law enforcement activity occurring within a school zone. “Shelter in place” means that all students and staff continue with regular activities while inside a locked and secured school facility. To ensure both the physical and emotional safety of our school communities, it is critical that a “shelter in place” be enacted when immigration is known to be within a school zone.
- **School Zones:** A “school zone” must not be misinterpreted by local LEAs to merely pertain to a school building. In order to protect against the aggressive tactics currently being utilized by immigration agents, a school zone must include all property and land owned, leased, used, or operated by or on behalf of a local school system including the following: all areas of school buildings and other facilities; athletic fields; playgrounds; parking lots; walkways; child care facilities; prekindergarten facilities; school transportation vehicles; designated school transportation stops; and institutions of higher education that receives public funds.

In Chicago, children inhaled tear gas while on the playground<sup>3</sup>. In Minneapolis, ICE activity starting off campus escalated into violent confrontations with students and staff<sup>4</sup>. Here in Maryland, caregivers have been abducted just moments after dropping off their child at school<sup>5</sup>. In other instances, such as that at Eastern Middle School in Silver Spring, students have witnessed the violent apprehension of community members leading to a significant drop in attendance<sup>6</sup>.

For these reasons, We Are CASA respectfully asks that you amend SB810 so that school leaders can act with confidence and speed to protect our students and their caregivers when there is

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thebanner.com/education/k-12-schools/maryland-school-enrollment-shrinking-why-UDZRSMI5FZFC7GOYWCSVUCYDR4/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/chicago-immigration-enforcement-children-tear-gas-border-patrol-rcna241629>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/minneapolis-schools-cancel-classes-ice-raid-high-school-day-renee-nico-rcna253081>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.baltimoresun.com/2025/12/17/salisbury-apparent-ice-raid-near-elementary-school/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://bethesdamagazine.com/2025/09/12/ice-incident-eastern-middle-school/>

known to be an imminent threat to their safety. Students and families must know that our schools are committed to protecting children to the best of their ability. They must know that our schools are safe zones and that every child, regardless of race, ethnicity or immigration status, has a right to learn in a secure and welcoming environment. When students feel safe, attendance improves, engagement increases, and families become more involved. This strengthens not only our schools but our entire community.

**For these reasons, CASA respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report with amendments on Senate Bill 810.**