

Testimony in support of HB388 - 2020
Criminal Procedure - Civil Immigration Enforcement – Restrictions

To: Hon. Luke Clippinger, Chair, and members of the House Judiciary Committee
From: Reverend Cynthia Lapp
Date: February 11, 2020

I am writing in support of House Bill 388, Criminal Procedure - Civil Immigration Enforcement – Restrictions.

I am pastor at Hyattsville Mennonite Church. My congregation is committed to loving our neighbors as ourselves. Currently we are concerned for our immigrant neighbors who live in fear of all law enforcement. I am also a community chaplain with the Hyattsville City Police Department. I have seen first hand the importance of a law like HB 388. It has allowed our many immigrant neighbors to live more freely and comfortably within the city. It has increased trust with the local police officers.

HB388 would prohibit police from inquiring about immigration status during stops or any interaction with the public, and prohibit any cooperation with federal immigration authorities unless otherwise required by law. A clear policy like this will increase trust in Maryland's immigrant community, leading to better reporting of crime and making us all safer. In many communities, residents have hesitated to report crimes, including theft and even rape, because they or a family member were undocumented, and they feared any interaction with local police. I want all Maryland residents to feel safe and not hesitate to aid police in preventing and solving crimes. Our local and state police have enough to do keeping Maryland safe without adding enforcement of federal immigration law.

Studies have repeatedly shown that immigrants, including undocumented immigrants, commit less crime than native born citizens. Studies have also shown that jurisdictions with policies and laws like HB388 have lower crime rates than those without.

I strongly urge you to reach a favorable report for HB388. It will increase all Maryland residents' trust in police, making us all safer. It is the moral and right thing to do.

Respectfully yours,
Cynthia Lapp
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