



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Shared Voices for Liberal Religious Values in Maryland

Testimony in Support of HB 388 Criminal Procedure – Civil Immigration Enforcement - Restrictions

To: Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair, and Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Tammy Spengler, co-Chair, Immigration Task Force, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Date: February 10, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 388.

Unitarian Universalists Legislative Ministry of MD's (UULM-MD) Committee on Immigration strongly supports the pending Bill 388. UULM-MD is a statewide advocacy network of Unitarian Universalists. We work to educate, mobilize, and coordinate UUs on specific issues before the Maryland General Assembly. We advocate for bills that foster justice, health and equity in society and seek to nurture an inclusive, life affirming system of government.

As Unitarians, we are very concerned about the climate of fear that our immigrant neighbors are experiencing on a local and national level, and we want to encourage the State of MD to do all it can to protect the rights of immigrants in this threatening climate. This past week the Horizon Foundation in Howard County released a study that showed that “nearly 50% of Latina high schoolers report feeling sad and hopeless to the point of stopping their usual activities, compared to 23% of White students and 26% of Black students. They are also most likely to take the further step of making suicide plans.” As a mental health therapist and concerned citizen, these numbers are extremely alarming. We have let our immigrant neighbors, particularly those of Latinx origin or Muslim faith, to feel isolated, targeted, and alone as they hear the xenophobic rhetoric on the news every day. Now we know that this fear and hopelessness is literally killing our children, even if they have not yet been separated from their families or banned from this country.

HB 388 contains prohibitions that would prohibit a law enforcement agent from inquiring about an individual's immigration status, citizenship status, or place of birth or transferring an individual to federal immigration authorities under certain circumstances. HB 388 will allow local law enforcement to focus on keeping our communities safe and not take on the role of ICE. We do not believe anyone in our community should fear being stopped by the police because of the color of their skin, their accent, or their dress, and then be interrogated about their citizenship status. And we want everyone in Maryland to feel safe enough to report a crime to the police without worrying about becoming a target. We need a true partnership between local law enforcement and the community to keep our neighborhoods safe. That partnership cannot exist if a sizable portion of the community is afraid of the police.

Please vote to pass HB 388 and send a message to our immigrant neighbors and to Maryland

citizens that hate has no home in Maryland. Let them know that their police forces are here to protect them, not to harm them. Please keep standing up for the people of Maryland, for our local police, and for protecting our communities. **Please vote to pass the HB 388.**

Thank you,

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