

Preserving Community Trust in Law Enforcement is Better for Maryland Communities and Our Economy

Position Statement in Support of House Bill 388

Given before the House Judiciary Committee

Jailing suspected undocumented immigrants at the request of federal officials costs Maryland and its localities hundreds of thousands of dollars each year, using scarce state and local resources that could be better spent on more pressing law enforcement needs. The detentions, which federal law does not require and which overwhelmingly target non-violent offenders, also erode trust in local law enforcement among both documented and undocumented immigrants. This can hamper the prevention and investigation of more serious crimes. For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports House Bill 388.

When local police appear to be an arm of federal immigration enforcement, community members fear that any contact with law enforcement, including coming forward as a witness to or victim of crime, could lead to their confinement or deportation. House Bill 388 would give immigrants more confidence that there won't be negative consequences when seeking help from the police or aiding an investigation. It also gives state and local law enforcement officers assurance that they will not face legal consequences for putting public safety before immigration enforcement.

Detaining individuals in state and local jails is costly to Maryland and burdensome for understaffed and overused facilities. House Bill 388 would prohibit using those facilities to detain suspected undocumented immigrants and prevent federal authorities from shifting the cost of immigration enforcement to Maryland.

Maryland's immigrant communities are critical to the state's economy. Immigrants make up nearly 20 percent of Maryland's workforce, and immigrant-led households pay \$3 billion a year in state and local taxes.¹ It is critical that Maryland remain a welcoming place for immigrants to build their lives.

Immigrants should not have to fear unjust discrimination, detention, or separation from their families, regardless of their legal status, and local law enforcement officers should be able to protect their communities from serious crime without complications from federal immigration policies.

For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully requests that the Judiciary Committee make a favorable report on House Bill 388.

¹ American Immigration Council. "Immigrants in Maryland." 2017.
https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_maryland.pdf