



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

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Testimony in Support of HB 403 - Immigration Enforcement - Public Schools, Hospitals, and Courthouses - Policies

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

From: Jim Caldiero, Co-Chair, Immigration Task Force, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Date: February 11, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 403 which requires the Attorney General to develop guidelines for schools, hospitals and courthouses to establish policies that limit civil immigration enforcement on their premises and thus making these facilities safe and accessible to all.

Last year, I submitted written testimony in support of HB 1273, a bill similar to the current HB 403. That testimony is as valid today as it was last February.

In fact, the issue has become more pressing. Although U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement professes to abide by its stated policy of “sensitive locations,” there are numerous examples of ICE agents either deliberately or mistakenly ignoring the policy. Moreover, Mr. Trump has stated that there are no more safe spaces for undocumented immigrants.

Last year, I spoke with several parents of Hispanic/Latino students of Centennial High School in Ellicott City, Howard County. The school is noted as highly competitive, in an affluent neighborhood with only a small percentage of Latino students. These parents related to me that many Hispanic/Latino parents do not allow their children to take advantage of programs offered by the school, including free and reduced meals, because they fear that any involvement with the government could place them in jeopardy.

At a meeting at St. John’s Evangelical Roman Catholic Church in Columbia, a large Latino congregation, I heard stories about mothers afraid to take sick children to the hospital and, much worse, being turned away or reported to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Imagine sending a sick child to school where germs spread, leading to even more children becoming ill? Think of the horrendous effect of a measles outbreak or worse, the current coronavirus from China.

Although ICE promulgated a “sensitive locations” policy in 2011, reports abound of ICE agents ignoring this policy, for example, apprehending undocumented students on their way to school.

Mr. Trump's inhumane statement that there are no safe spaces for undocumented immigrants and the resulting aggressive implementation of Mr. Trump's immigration policies by U.S. government agencies continues to engender fear among our immigrant neighbors. Passage of HB 403 will help to alleviate some of that fear

My Unitarian Universalist faith calls me to respect the inherent worth and dignity of every person and to promote and affirm justice, equity and compassion in human relations. Removing the fear that is prevalent among some of our neighbors is not only demanded by my faith, but also makes sense. HB 403 will surely help to assuage the fear in our immigrant communities, allow students to take advantage of government-sponsored programs and ensure the public health and safety of all Marylanders.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB 403.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jim Caldiero
4128 Lotus Circle
Ellicott City, MD 21043
Email: immigration@uulmmd.org

Sources:

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ICE Raids Hospitals: <https://psmag.com/social-justice/ice-keeps-raiding-hospitals-and-harming-disabled-children>

| President Trump's approach is making it harder to enforce every other type of law, incl...
<https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/immigration/327837-public-safety-requires-courthouses-to-be-safe-spaces-for>

ICE Policy on Sensitive Locations: <https://www.ice.gov/ero/enforcement/sensitive-loc>

Reports of ICE Sensitive Locations Violations: <https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/is-there-anywhere-i-m-safe-from-an-ice-arrest.html>