

# Keep Schools, Hospitals, and Courts Safe for Maryland's Immigrant Population

## Position Statement in Support of House Bill 403

### *Given before the House Judiciary Committee*

For years, Maryland has recognized the benefits of welcoming immigrants into its communities. It is beneficial to all Marylanders when immigrants are able to enroll their children in school, seek necessary medical treatment, and participate in our justice system without fear of unjust discrimination, detention, or separation from their families, regardless of their legal status. Limiting the access of immigration enforcement officials to schools, hospitals, and courts helps these critical institutions function the way that they are supposed to. For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy supports House Bill 403.

Adopting policies that afford all residents, regardless of their immigration status, the opportunity to thrive helps Maryland foster community well-being and strengthen its economy. Maryland is home to about 250,000 residents who are undocumented,<sup>i</sup> and these individuals make significant contributions to our communities and economy. More than half of Maryland's undocumented residents have lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years and about one in seven have lived here for 20 years or more.<sup>ii</sup> Immigrants make up nearly 20 percent of Maryland's workforce, and immigrant-led households pay \$3 billion a year in state and local taxes.<sup>iii</sup> It is critical that Maryland remain a welcoming place for immigrants to build their lives.

No parent should have to fear being separated from their family when they are taking a child to school, attending a parent-teacher meeting, or participating in the PTA. Schools with a high level of parental involvement tend to have more satisfied teachers, higher-quality programs, and better reputations in their communities,<sup>iv</sup> so removing barriers that prevent some parents from fully participating in their child's education is beneficial to all students.

Fear of immigration enforcement in courts can prevent immigrants from participating in our criminal justice system. An immigrant who is the victim of a crime or witnesses one is less likely to come forward if they don't trust law enforcement or the court system. As some jurisdictions in Maryland struggle with high crime rates, it benefits all Marylanders to ensure that immigrants don't fear discrimination or detention when they report a crime or are summoned to court.

### **Equity Analysis: House Bill 403 reduces racial disparities by making Maryland institutions more accessible**

Policies in the past have led to a system of unequal opportunities for marginalized groups within Maryland. Although the most obvious racially discriminatory policies have long been overturned or mitigated, the impact of

these policies continue to persist in both society and public policy, and have led to significant racial disparities in educational attainment, access to health care, and criminal justice outcomes.

Allowing the fear of immigration enforcement officials to prevent immigrants and their families from accessing schools, hospitals, and courts only exacerbates these disparities. House Bill 403 will help to alleviate that fear and improve access to services that help Marylanders thrive.

**For these reasons, the Maryland Center on Economic Policy respectfully requests that the House Judiciary Committee make a favorable report on House Bill 403.**

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<sup>i</sup> Pew Research Center. “Mexicans decline to less than half the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population for the first time.” June 12, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/12/us-unauthorized-immigrant-population-2017/>

<sup>ii</sup> Center for Migration Studies. “State-Level Unauthorized Population and Eligible-to-Naturalize Estimates.” <http://data.cmsny.org/state.html>

<sup>iii</sup> American Immigration Council. “Immigrants in Maryland.” 2017. [https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants\\_in\\_maryland.pdf](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_maryland.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Education.com. “The Benefits of Parent Involvement: What Research Has to Say.” 2017. <https://tx50000103.schoolwires.net/cms/lib/TX50000103/Centricity/Domain/21/Parent%20Liaison/benefits-parent-involvement-research.pdf>