

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB234
Personal Information - State and Local Agencies - Restrictions on Access
Jose Hernandez, Resident of Rockville, MD

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jose Hernandez and I am writing to ask you to support SB234, the Driver Privacy Act. Last year, you heard from my wife, Maribel, who testified in support of this bill at the house and senate hearings last year. She testified not long after I was arrested and detained by ICE. Her and my children traveled to Annapolis to share our story because MVA data sharing with ICE has severely hurt me and my family.

I immigrated to the United States from El Salvador decades ago and have been living in Rockville, Montgomery County for several years with my wife and five children. In the early morning hours of February 2020, ICE agents stormed by house and arrested me in front of my children. When I asked them how they found my information, they told me that they were able to track me using the MVA database. That day, they took me to the Howard County Detention Center. I spent most of the last year in detention - around 8 months in total.

During those 8 months, I experienced some of the most dangerous health conditions and inhumane treatment that I had ever had to endure. I was eventually released back to my family and now, I await for my case to play out in the immigration courts.

For the 8 months that I was detained, my family and I suffered so much, both physically and mentally. My wife was left to take care of all five of my children, while working long hours to make ends meet. When the pandemic hit, it became even more difficult for my wife to manage the responsibilities of parenting and working on her own. It was very scary for me as well, being in jail during a pandemic with such poor health conditions.

Up to this day, I continue to suffer from the traumatic experiences from my time in the detention center. When I got my driver's license, I thought that I was safe to drive. I had no idea that ICE would be using that information and that it would separate me from my family.

I am here today to share my story in hopes that no other family or individual goes through what I went through again. I am here to ask state legislators and members of the committee to support this important bill, SB234, to prohibit ICE from accessing information from the MVA database.