

March 3, 2021

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB750/SB317

Office of the Attorney General - Right to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings Coordinator

Senate President Bill Ferguson, House Speaker Adrienne Jones, Senate Judicial Proceedings Chairman Will Smith, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Luke Clippinger, and members of the Maryland General Assembly:

We, the undersigned clergy and faith based organizations and places of worship throughout the State of Maryland, call for your support and leadership in passing substantive immigration legislation during the 2021 General Assembly session. We write to you with moral urgency and implore you to protect Maryland's immigrant communities and, in doing so, protect us all.

Welcoming the stranger and protecting the vulnerable in our midst is the hallmark of our religious traditions. These theological commitments are indispensable. They lay the foundation for treating all human beings with dignity and respect. In a pandemic when we are all vulnerable, it is critical for the General Assembly to pass the following bills to protect Maryland's immigrant communities which have been disproportionately devastated by COVID-19:

1. The Trust Act (HB304/SB88)
2. Dignity not Detention (HB16/SB478)
3. MVA Privacy (HB23/SB234)
4. Universal Representation (HB317/SB317)

Each of these bills seek to curb our state's participation in the unjust targeting of immigrants and undocumented persons by limiting state and local resources from supporting federal immigration enforcement, making immigrants feel safer, providing legal representation, and increasing community trust and safety for us all.

The displacement of people caused by war, violence, and persecution has resulted in thousands of people who come to our nation seeking relief — many forced to live without documentation. We have grieved over the countless stories in our communities of parents who have been stripped away from their families, immigrants who have been abused and neglected in the poor conditions of immigration facilities, victims of crimes who are denied justice out of fear of deportation, sick people who are scared to seek medical care, and children who are left without parents. Collaboration with ICE has led to hostile environments for people of color and an increase in racial profiling that is simply morally bankrupt. Our houses of worship and

organizations have done our part to provide sanctuary for our neighbors. Our state must act as well.

We ask that you consider not only the moral obligation we have to love and protect our neighbors, but also the benefits of this package for all Marylanders. When victims and witnesses of crimes cannot trust the police and seek their protection, the risk to public safety increases. When people are afraid to seek treatment for an illness, public health is compromised. When families are separated, our schools and child welfare agencies carry the burden. Society as a whole suffers when members of our community are forced to live in the shadows.

Our ethical and theological commitments compel us to publicly call for our legislators to act boldly and courageously to protect marginalized community members whose safety is our collective responsibility. We urge you to prioritize passage of the package of legislation during the 2021 Legislative Session.

Sincerely,

Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation

ADL Washington, D.C.

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action - Prince George's County, MD

CAIR

Cantor George Henschel, Kol HaLev Synagogue Community

Cantor Rochelle Helzner

Catholic Charities of Baltimore

Catholic Labor Network

Channing Memorial Church

Christina Pham Linhoff, Baltimore Dharma Group

Columbia Jewish Congregation

Come As You Are of Har Sinai Oheb Shalom Congregation

Congregation Action Network

Elaine Richman, President, Bolton Street Synagogue

Environmental Justice Ministry Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

Episcopal Refugee & Immigrant Center Alliance

Father Vidal Rivas, St. Matthews Episcopal Church, Hyattsville, MD

First English Lutheran Church

Fr. James Casciotti, S.J. Pastor St. Ignatius Church

Fr. Ty Hullinger, St Anthony of Padua, St Dominic and Most Precious Blood Catholic Community

Francis DeBernardo, Executive Director, New Ways Ministry
Immigrant Justice Ministry, Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
Insight Meditation Community of Washington
Jewish Community Relations Council
Jews United for Justice
Justice Chapel
Lorraine Sorbello, Chair, Social Action Committee, Towson Unitarian Universalist Church
Matthew Dyer, Lead Pastor - Cedar Ridge Community Church
Minister Emerita, Paint Branch UU Church
Muslim Voices Coalition
Oseh Shalom
Pastor Alvin Gwynn Sr President IMA of Baltimore
Pastor Bob Ruggieri
Pastor Chris Schaefer
Pastor Franklin Morales, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Silver Spring, MD
Pastor Mark Parker
Peggy Meyer, Chair, Social Action, St. Vincent de Paul Church
Rabbi Adam Raskin
Rabbi Alana Suskin, The Pomegranate Initiative
Rabbi Alison Kobey
Rabbi Andrew Busch
Rabbi Andy Gordon
Rabbi Ariana Katz
Rabbi Charles Arian
Rabbi Daniel Cotzin Burg, Beth Am Synagogue
Rabbi Elissa Sachs-Kohen
Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb
Rabbi Gordon Fuller
Rabbi Kim Blumenthal
Rabbi Marc Israel
Rabbi Phil Miller
Rabbi Robert J. Saks, Rabbi Emerita, Bet Mishpachah
Rabbi Rory Katz
Rabbi Sonya Starr
Rev Dr. Rob Apgar-Taylor
Rev. Abhi Janamanchi, Senior Minister, Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
Rev. Ann Copp
Rev. Cat Goodrich, pastor, Faith Presbyterian Church

Rev. Charlene Belsom Zellmer
Rev. Charles Cloughen, Jr.
Rev. Christa Fuller Burns
Rev. David Ware
Rev. Deborah Vaughn, MDiv BCC
Rev. Donna J Schramm
Rev. Dr. Eliezer Valentín-Castañón
Rev. Dr. Malcolm Frazier
Rev. Dr. Matt Braddock
Rev. Dr. Patricia Allen
Rev. Francis Belanger, O.P.
Rev. Harold Garman
Rev. Holly Jackson
Rev. Isaac Vineyard
Rev. Jessica Lowry
Rev. Jon Nelson
Rev. Judith M Thomas
Rev. Julie Hart
Rev. Kara Scroggins, Glenmont United Methodist Church
Rev. Karen Lee Scrivo, Maryland Unitarian Universalist Community Minister
Rev. Kirkland Reynolds
Rev. Kobi Little
Rev. Lyn Cox
Rev. Madeline Tallman, ELCA
Rev. Paige Getty, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia
Rev. R. Alexander Tracy, Ph.D.
Rev. Stacey Cole Wilson, BWC
Rev. Timothy Stern
Rev. Wanda Bynum Duckett
Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries
River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Sharon Shea, St Ignatius Church Baltimore
Sisterhood of Salam Shalom Silver Spring
St Paul's Episcopal Church, Social Justice Ministry
St. Anthony of Padua, St. Dominic & Most Precious Blood Catholic Community
St. Matthew
Temple Emanuel, Kensington, MD
The Rev. Gregg Knepp

The Rev. Julia Fritts, Priest in Charge, St. Mark's on the Hill Episcopal Church

The Rev. Maria Cristina C. Paglinauan

The Rev. Rován Wernsdorfer

The Reverend Clare L. Petersberger

The Very Rev. Rob Boulter, Dean, Episcopal Cathedral of the Incarnation

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Southern Maryland

UU Legislative Ministry of Maryland