

Testimony in support of SB0265

Probation Before Judgment – Probation Agreements – Probation Not Deportation

To: Hon. William Smith, Jr., Chair, Hon. Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice-chair and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Martha Wells, University Park

Date: February 2, 2022

I am writing in **support of Senate Bill 0265**, Probation Before Judgment – Probation Agreements – Probation Not Deportation, on behalf of the Congregation Action Network (CAN). I am a member of the Congregation Action Network is a network of faith communities in Washington, DC, and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs acting in solidarity to end detention, deportation, profiling, and criminalization of immigrants and demanding and upholding justice, dignity, safety, and family unity. With over 75 congregations and a thousand members throughout the capital area, including over 25 congregations with thousands of members in Montgomery and Prince George's counties, we live our faith in advocacy for and solidarity with our immigrant neighbors.

As a person of faith committed to ending the detention and deportation of immigrants, I adhere to the sacred texts of most major faiths that call for welcoming the stranger and treating each other with love, dignity, respect, and compassion. I believe in liberation and that immigrant families should be united and free - never incarcerated.

SB265 "Probation, Not Deportation," will amend Maryland's Probation Before Judgment (PBJ) statute so that all Maryland residents, regardless of their immigration status, have access to the benefit of probation.

Right now, a Maryland PBJ is considered a conviction under federal immigration law. The proposed legislation adds an additional method that would make probation accessible to all Marylanders without risk of deportation and detention for noncitizens. This proposed amendment promotes justice, fairness, and will keep Maryland families together.

I respectfully urge you to reach a **favorable** report for SB265. It will provide the benefits of probation to all residents of Maryland facing loss of their liberty and home. It is the right and moral thing to do.

Respectfully yours,
Martha Wells
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