



HB0304 - State and Local Government – Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement

Presented to the Hon. Luke Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

March 3, 2021 1:30 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the House Judiciary Committee **a favorable report on HB0304 - State and Local Government – Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement**, sponsored by Delegate Wanika Fisher.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. However, our mission is hindered when not every Maryland resident can have access to their reproductive rights without fear.

Non-U.S. citizens residing in Maryland often do not search out reproductive or maternal healthcare at public hospitals or justice for sexual assault or domestic violence for fear of deportation. Having access to healthcare and justice is essential for all Marylanders and should not be hindered by any factor imposed by the state.

In the United States, immigrants make up approximately 14% of the population (4.4 million people), and account for 17% of women of reproductive age as well as 23% of births in the U.S.¹ However, without official residency or citizenship status, these women live in fear of seeking out medical care for their own health as well as that of the fetus. They shy away from hospitals and labor and delivery services to opt for unmonitored births in non-medical environments and are unable to attend regular prenatal checkups accessible to U.S. citizens. Additionally, immigrant women are less likely to seek justice for instances of sexual assault, domestic violence, and other forms of violence, again, due to fear of deportation² They fear the U.S. judicial system and forgo their own right to justice for these crimes committed against themselves and/or members of their families as a result.

This piece of legislation will eliminate this persistent fear in the immigrant community. It will protect immigrants from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at sensitive, public locations such as hospitals and courts. It will allow for this large population to seek out medical care without fear by providing immunity to any state and local government that does not provide information to the federal government about factors such as immigration status. This will also create a greater ability for immigrants to seek out justice against their assailants in a court of law. Several localities in Maryland have already passed similar policies and codifying it into Maryland state law will create solid and unwavering security for all undocumented peoples in the state. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on HB0304**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Sheila Desai and Goleen Samari, "COVID -19 and Immigrants' Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services in the United States," *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 52, no. 3 (June 12, 2020): pp. 145-149,

<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1363/psrh.12150>

² "Immigrant Victims of Sexual Assault," National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), accessed January 24, 2021,

<https://www.nsvrc.org/sarts/toolkit/6-12>