



Advocates for Children and Youth improves the lives and experiences of Maryland's children and youth by advancing policies and programs across multiple issue areas that tackle racial disparities and improve outcomes to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive. www.acy.org

Testimony before the Judiciary Committee

In SUPPORT of House Bill 1273- Immigration Enforcement- County Boards of Education, Public Institutions of Higher Education, and Hospitals- Policies

**Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Senior Associate, Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY)
March 5, 2019**

A national survey, the *Impact of Immigration Enforcement on Teaching and Learning in the Nation's Schools*, found that nearly **90% of school administrators had observed behavioral or emotional problems manifest in the immigrant students they served since the 2016 presidential election.**¹ "Immigrant student" here includes students born abroad and in the US, who come from immigrant families. That survey also found that 84% of educators nationally see their students expressing concern with immigration enforcement issues at school, with a third of those respondents noting that these concerns were an extensive occurrence.

School-based personnel reported increases in absenteeism and academic performance declines among immigrant students, declines in school involvement amongst immigrant families, and indirect effects, mainly empathetic anxiety for their peers, among non-immigrant students.² A Maryland teacher responding to the survey wrote that "We have **one student who had attempted to slit her wrists because her family had been separated** and she wants to be with her mother. She literally didn't want to live without her mother." Federal immigration policies and rhetoric have had a clear and lasting negative effect on Maryland students and school communities.

Wide disparities in educational attainment among immigrant groups, achievement gaps among students with limited English proficiency, above-average high school dropout rates, low graduation rates, and public policies which fail to consider impacts on immigrant populations are just a few of the major barriers to the success of Maryland's immigrant communities, as noted by the Department of Legislative Services in 2016.³ HB 1273 is a critical step forward in addressing these structural gaps.

Immigration has accounted for over 70% of population growth in Montgomery and Prince George's counties since 2010. Undocumented immigrants in particular represented 6.2% of the state's labor force and 4.3% of Maryland's total population in 2016, both of which were higher

¹ The Civil Rights Project. Gandara, Patricia and Ee, Joy. "U.S. Immigration Enforcement Policy and Its Impact on Teaching and Learning in the Nation's Schools" University of California, Los Angeles. February 2018.

² *ibid*

³ Department of Legislative Services. "International Immigration to Maryland: Demographic Profile of the State's Immigrant Community" State of Maryland. 2016.

than the national average of 5.1% and 3.5%, respectively. Just as immigration is a national hot topic, the success and well-being of all immigrants in Maryland needs to remain a top-line issue in the General Assembly. **We cannot afford to malign one segment of our society based on their nationality** because they *are* members of our society and our overall successes (educational, economic, health, and otherwise) are linked.

House Bill 1273 recognizes a moral imperative to provide high-quality education and healthcare to all Maryland residents, regardless of their citizenship status. Further, the legislation doesn't attempt to usurp the authority of the federal government in answering that imperative. ACY prioritizes the creation of trauma-informed schools and the minimization of police presence in all schools. For these reasons, and all the reasons listed above, **ACY strongly urges a favorable report on this bill.**

