



Testimony FOR Expedited Bill 35-25
Immigrant Protections (Promoting Community Trust - Immigrant Protections Act)
Montgomery County Council
1/13/26

Dear President Fani-Gonzalez and members of the Council:

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC is pleased to offer a favorable testimony **in strong support** of the Expedited Bill 35-25, Immigrant Protections (Promoting Community Trust - Immigrant Protections Act). This bill would prevent local resources from being used for federal immigration enforcement in a variety of cases and would help signal that Montgomery County cares about all its residents, regardless of place of birth or immigration status.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC (Advancing Justice | AAJC) is a national non-profit, non-partisan organization that works through policy advocacy, community education, and litigation to advance the civil and human rights of Asian Americans and to build and promote a fair and equitable society for all. Founded in 1991 in Washington D.C., Advancing Justice | AAJC is one of the nation's leading experts on civil rights issues of importance to the Asian American community, and has worked on immigration-related issues since its founding.

Advancing Justice | AAJC urges the Council to adopt policies and legislation that focus on ensuring that community members feel safe, not threatened by their local government, including their local law enforcement units. Indeed, we have seen over the past year how out-of-control federal immigration enforcement has frightened community members, torn families apart, and even led to the killing of U.S. citizens, as we unfortunately saw in Minnesota last week.

Immigration is an important issue to Asian Americans. Two thirds of Asian Americans are immigrants while many others are the children of immigrants.¹ There were around 1.7 million undocumented Asian and Pacific Islander people living in the U.S., about 17 percent of the total undocumented population.² But beyond the statistics, Asian American history is replete with examples of how narratives about who is and is not American can harm entire communities. Whether we talk about the Chinese Exclusion Act, the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, or the discriminatory profiling of South Asian communities post-9/11, as Asian Americans we are deeply aware of the injustice of being allowed to live in, work in, and contribute to the U.S. without being seen as fully American.

¹ Asian Americans Advancing Justice, "Inside the Numbers: How Immigration Shapes Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities" (2019), 6, available at https://www.advancingjustice-aaajc.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/1153_AAJC_Immigration_Final_0.pdf.

² Center for Migration Studies of New York, "A Demographic Profile of Undocumented Immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands" (2022), available at <https://cmsny.org/undocumented-aapi-millet-061322/>.

Over the past year, our community has been harmed by the string of anti-immigrant policies and laws imposed by the federal government. Federal immigration enforcement separated a father seeking asylum from his child,³ deported our community members to countries they have no connection to and that have questionable human rights practices,⁴ and even deported U.S. citizens.⁵ It should come as no surprise, then, that immigrants across the U.S., including Asian immigrants, are experiencing fear and confusion.

While Montgomery County cannot stop ICE enforcement from happening, it can send a clear message to its community members that it does not engage in or condone the attacks on immigrant communities. For this reason, Advancing Justice | AAJC strongly supports efforts to codify into County law immigrant protections and to strengthen measures to limit, and where feasible, prohibit the use of County resources and warrantless cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or any federal agency for the purpose of detention and deportation.

Similar laws have been implemented in jurisdictions across the nation, including jurisdictions with large immigrant populations, in recognition that communities are safer when everyone in that community, including immigrants and mixed-status families, feel comfortable engaging with local law enforcement, accessing health care, and engaging in services. A 2017 study found that jurisdictions with such laws were safer and more prosperous than jurisdictions without such laws.⁶ Other studies have rejected the assertion that these kinds of laws would somehow increase crime.⁷

Given that immigrants make up 30 percent of Montgomery County's population, laws that strengthen the trust that community-members have in the County will only make the County stronger. Legislation like this bill, which would limit County partnership with ICE, is allowed by state and federal law, and would provide a measure of clarity to immigrant community members who might otherwise fear that interacting with Montgomery County in any capacity could lead to arrest, detention, and deportation.

Montgomery County must stand firmly on the side of families, community trust, racial justice, and constitutional rights. By codifying these protections, the Council will send a clear message

³ Gwynne Hogan and Haidee Chu, "Father and Son Separated by ICE Deported Together to China," *The City* (Dec. 19, 2025), available at <https://www.thecity.nyc/2025/12/19/father-son-zheng-separated-ice-deported-china/>.

⁴ Joseph Sepansky, "US sends another 'third-country' deportation flight to Eswatini," *Aljazeera* (Oct. 6, 2025), available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/10/6/us-sends-another-third-country-deportation-flight-to-eswatini>.

⁵ National Immigration Project, "ICE Deports Man Claiming U.S. Citizenship to Laos Despite Federal Court Order" (Oct. 29, 2025), available at <https://nipnlg.org/news/press-releases/ice-deports-man-claiming-us-citizenship-laos-despite-federal-court-order>.

⁶ Tom K. Wong, "The Effects of Sanctuary Policies on Crime and the Economy" (2017), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-effects-of-sanctuary-policies-on-crime-and-the-economy/>.

⁷ Schutt, Adam R. (2019) "Sanctuary Cities and Their Respective Effect on Crime Rates," *Undergraduate Economic Review*: Vol. 16: Iss. 1, Article 20, available at <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/uer/vol16/iss1/20>; O'Brien, B. G., Collingwood, L., & El-Khatib, S. O. (2017). The Politics of Refuge: Sanctuary Cities, Crime, and Undocumented Immigration. *Urban Affairs Review*, 55(1), 3-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087417704974> (Original work published 2019).

that the County rejects using local resources to tear families apart and reaffirms its commitment to being a truly welcoming and safe place for all residents.

For all the reasons stated above, **Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC** urges a favorable report on Expedite Bill 35-25 Immigrant Protections (Promoting Community Trust - Immigrant Protections Act).