

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF EXPEDITED BILL 35-25
County Administration - Immigrant Protections
(Promoting Community Trust - Immigrant Protections Act)

To: President Natali Fani-Gonzales, Vice-President Marilyn Balcombe and
Members of the Montgomery County Council

From: Carol Schlenker

Date: January 13, 2026

As a resident of Rockville for more than 27 years, as the granddaughter and spouse of immigrants, and as an immigration paralegal and immigrant rights activist, I'm writing to express my wholehearted support for Expedited Bill 35-25 County Administration – Immigrant Protections (“Promoting Community Trust – Immigrant Protections Act”).

As part of my immigration paralegal job, I volunteer at the Catholic Charities office at the Montgomery County Family Justice Center, screening immigrant survivors of domestic violence (DV) for eligibility for U visas—a category specifically for immigrants who assist law enforcement in the detection, investigation, and prosecution of violent crimes—and for relief under the Violence Against Women Act. DV survivors are the proverbial canary in a coalmine, i.e., frequently the first victim of abusers who go on to commit violent crimes against the wider community.¹ A DV survivor's willingness to report her abuse, especially if she is undocumented, requires a high degree of trust in local law enforcement. If she suspects that local law enforcement is cooperating with ICE to such an extent that she, rather than her abusive partner, will be arrested, she is unlikely to take that first step toward breaking the cycle of violence against her, her children, and the wider community. In other words, a clear, codified county trust act will protect not only our most vulnerable immigrant neighbors but also ultimately the rest of us.

Thank you in advance for your courage in passing this bill.

¹ Research from the Institute for Firearm Injury Prevention at the University of Michigan shows around 68% of mass shooters either killed their family and intimate partners, or they have a history of domestic violence. See: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mass-shootings-domestic-violence-abuse-connection-research/>