



Montgomery County Community Action Board Testimony

Expedited Bill 35-25, County Administration – Immigrant Protections (“Promoting Community Trust – Immigrant Protections Act”)

January 13, 2026

SUPPORT

The Montgomery County Community Action Board, the County’s local, state, and federally designated anti-poverty group, strongly supports Council Bill 35-25, which would codify important protections for immigrants in our community. These include prohibiting discrimination against individuals based on their immigration status, limiting the use of County agents and resources in immigration enforcement, ensuring that County services are provided to residents regardless of their immigration status, restricting access to County facilities, prohibiting law enforcement from arresting individuals exclusively for immigration enforcement purposes, along with other protections. Our board strongly supports these measures as a way to reduce fear and anxiety and reassure members of the immigrant community that they should not be afraid to access critical services. Addressing the needs of the immigrant community is a key priority for the Community Action Board because we recognize that too many immigrants in our community, many of whom are served by Community Action Agency programs, are living in fear right now.

As the governing body for the Community Action Agency and the County’s Head Start program, we continue to hear from staff about families who are living in fear, scared to apply for services, scared to send their children to school, and in some cases, scared to leave their homes. Our agency’s own Takoma-East Silver Spring (TESS) Community Action Center, Navigation Program, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, and the Cluster Projects, the newest addition to the agency, address the needs of members of the immigrant community each and every day. The number of residents served through our Navigation program and the TESS Center has actually increased in recent months, reflecting both programs’ high level of trust within the community. At the same time, staff members have shared many stories of families directly impacted by immigration enforcement. In one family, for example, the father is too scared to leave home, resulting in the mother becoming the primary earner in the family. Their reduced income means

that the family is struggling to pay for necessities in our expensive County, where the Self-Sufficiency Standard for a family of four with two young children is nearly \$123,000.¹

Many in the immigrant community, which comprises one third of our County's population, about 42% of whom are not citizens, are living in extremely difficult circumstances right now². Such circumstances impact a family's emotional well-being, their mental and physical health, and their income. This bill can help to encourage residents to apply for needed services and reassure residents that the County supports them and will do everything in its power to protect them.

We appreciate the Council's leadership on this issue and ask that you consider additional steps to support our undocumented neighbors. While undocumented residents are ineligible for most federal safety net services, the County's own programs, such as Montgomery Cares and MC Groceries, provide critical support to residents with few other options. Expanding County-supported programs in terms of their reach and program eligibility can make a real difference.

Our board continues to advocate for additional support for legal services provided to undocumented residents. We have heard directly from residents in our free advocacy training program, the Community Advocacy Institute, that free and low-cost legal services are a significant need and we know that waiting lists are growing. We ask that you keep this need in mind during the upcoming budget season.

The Community Action Board strongly supports this bill and we offer our continued support for future efforts to protect immigrants in our community.

¹ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/OCA/CommunityAction/interactiveSelfSufficiency.html>

² https://data.census.gov/profile/Montgomery_County,_Maryland?g=050XX00US24031