



**Joint Government Operations/Public Safety Committee Hearing
Montgomery County Council**

January 12, 2026

Dear Esteemed Members of the Montgomery County Council,

On behalf of Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), I am honored to submit this written testimony in strong support of Expedited Bill 35-25, County Administration-Immigrant Protections (“Promoting Community Trust-Immigrant Protections Act”).

Founded in 2008, KIND is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing legal representation at no cost to unaccompanied immigrant children who enter the U.S. immigration system alone. In all of KIND’s work, KIND envisions a world in which every unaccompanied child on the move has access to legal counsel and has their rights and well-being protected as they migrate alone in search of safety. Through more than 12 offices across the United States, KIND provides direct legal representation, pro bono mentoring, and social services coordination for unaccompanied children at no cost to our clients. KIND’s Baltimore office has provided legal representation to children in Montgomery County since 2009. In addition to direct legal services pro bono mentoring, County funding has enabled KIND to deliver Know Your Rights presentations to youth in Montgomery County and to train Montgomery County attorneys on best practices for representing children in removal proceedings.

KIND’s holistic approach helps to address the trauma and critical needs of our child clients, improving the overall well-being of youth by fostering resilience and establishing better child-centered practices. KIND’s Social Services Team works with our Legal Programs Team to connect KIND’s young clients to needed resources to foster their safety and stability and help children and their families adjust to a new country, language, home, and community.

Montgomery County is home to one of the most diverse populations in the nation, with immigrants comprising more than 30% of our community. Our clients contribute immeasurably to the County’s economic vitality, cultural richness and social fabric. Yet, many live in fear that interactions with local government, whether seeking public safety assistance, accessing health care or applying for County services could lead to immigration consequences for themselves or their families. This fear undermines public safety, erodes trust and contradicts the values of fairness and inclusion that Montgomery County has long championed.

Expedited Bill 35-25 is essential for three key reasons:

1. Strengthening Public Safety and Community Trust

When residents fear that contacting law enforcement or County agencies could result in deportation or family separation, they are less likely to report crimes, cooperate in

investigations, or seek help. By limiting County involvement in federal civil immigration enforcement and prohibiting inquiries into immigration status unless required by law, this bill ensures that all residents can safely engage with County services. Every child deserves to feel safe when their family seeks help from County agencies—whether it’s calling the police in an emergency, visiting a library, or accessing health care. This bill ensures that families can engage with County services without fear that immigration status will be used against them.

2. Protecting Civil Rights and Promoting Equity

The bill codifies strong protections against discrimination and intimidation based on immigration status or perceived status. It guarantees that County benefits and services are provided equitably, regardless of country of birth or immigration status, and requires acceptance of alternative forms of identification. These measures affirm Montgomery County’s commitment to treating all residents with dignity and respect.

3. Ensuring Responsible Use of County Resources

Federal immigration enforcement is the responsibility of the federal government. This legislation ensures that County resources—staff time, facilities, and equipment—are not diverted from essential local priorities to support civil immigration enforcement actions. By focusing on criminal law enforcement and community safety, the County can better serve all residents.

Additionally, the bill modernizes confidentiality practices, mandates transparency through reporting requirements, and aligns with Maryland’s 2025 law restricting access to sensitive locations. These provisions collectively strengthen accountability and safeguard privacy.

What this bill does not do: It does not prevent law enforcement from enforcing criminal laws or prosecuting serious offenses. Rather, it ensures that civil immigration enforcement does not interfere with the County’s core mission of protecting public safety and upholding constitutional rights.

Montgomery County thrives when every child feels safe and supported. By adopting Expedited Bill 35-25, the Council will reaffirm its leadership in promoting equity, protecting families, and fostering trust between immigrant communities and local government.

Thank you for your commitment to these principles and for considering this critical legislation. We urge you to vote in favor of Expedited Bill 35-25.

Sincerely,

Victoria Villator, Esq.
Managing Director, Baltimore
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
Email: vvillator@supportkind.org