



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

HB 0598
Oppose

Judiciary Committee

HB 0598 Counties and Municipal Corporations – “Sanctuary Laws” for Illegal Aliens – Prohibition

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The City of Takoma Park has a 30 year commitment to protecting its widely diverse community as a Sanctuary City.

During the 1980’s, local churches began offering sanctuary to some of the thousands of refugees fleeing brutal civil wars in El Salvador and Guatemala. This led to a series of supporting resolutions initiated and adopted by then Mayor Sam Abbott and the Takoma Park City Council.

In 1985, the ordinance was passed officially making Takoma Park a “Sanctuary City.” Affirmed and amended several times, the last in 2007-08, the Takoma Park Sanctuary law (Municipal Code, Chapter 9.04) prohibits City police and other City employees from asking Takoma Park residents about their citizenship or immigration status. It also prohibits them from cooperating in the enforcement of federal immigration laws that could lead to the deportation of residents.

We view our ordinance as one way to build trust in the community and increase public safety. Residents who are immigrants, whether documented or undocumented, need not fear cooperating with the police if they witness a crime or if they are victims of crime. Additionally, the ordinance does not prevent our police officers from taking an individual into custody because of suspected criminal activity or pursuant to a valid non-immigration criminal warrant.

Withholding or reducing State funding provided to the City of Takoma Park because of its commitment to remain a sanctuary city would undermine our ability to serve our residents and keep them safe.

We urge the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on the bill.