



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

**HB 304
Support**

House Judiciary Committee

March 3, 2021

HB 304: State and Local Government - Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement

Testimony of Chief Antonio DeVaul

Chief, Takoma Park Police Department

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The City of Takoma Park and the Takoma Park Police Department strongly supports HB 304, State and Local Government – Participation in Federal Immigration Enforcement. This bill would clarify the parameters of State and Local participation in federal immigration enforcement efforts. It would prohibit information being shared or actions taken by local law enforcement regarding the real or suspected immigration status of a person, except in specified limited circumstances.

The City of Takoma Park has been a Sanctuary City since 1985 and our commitment to protecting our very diverse community has not wavered. People from all over the world are part of the Takoma Park community. All of our important City information is prepared in Spanish, Amharic, French and English. 30.1% of our residents were born outside of the United States, 44.1% of whom were born in Africa, 35.6% in Latin America, and 12% in Asia (as of the 2015-2019 American Community Survey).

In 1985, our City passed and implemented Ordinance No. 1985-63, which prohibits City police and other City employees from asking Takoma Park residents about their citizenship or immigration status, and prohibits local law enforcement from cooperating in the enforcement of immigration law. It is a policy of the City of Takoma Park that all residents shall have equal rights to enjoy the benefits of Takoma Park without fear of harassment or discrimination due to their nationality or citizenship status.

Neither the Immigration and Nationality Act nor any other federal or state law imposes a duty upon the City of Takoma Park or State of Maryland to enforce or assist in the enforcement of United States immigration law. We believe that HB 304 is of critical importance in reinforcing Takoma Park's multi-decade effort to improve public safety and build trust between law enforcement and the entire community, immigrant or not.

Our City policies, in place for over 35 years, have caused no impediment to carrying out our public safety duties. In fact, they have helped us by making it more comfortable for residents to report crimes and dangerous situations.

We believe that HB 304 would be beneficial across the State of Maryland, and know it will be helpful to reinforce Takoma Park's highly successful and non-controversial local law.

The City of Takoma Park urges a favorable report on HB 304.