

Impact of Immigration Issues and Resources in Our Local Community

As we view immigrants in our country being detained, arrested, and deported, many of us may wonder about what is happening to the immigrants who live in our community. We may be curious to know what is being done in our schools, with local law enforcement, in our state and local governments, non-profit volunteer organizations, and in the MD legislature.

First, here are some interesting facts about immigrants in the state of Maryland. Surprisingly, while it is difficult to get accurate data down to the county level, we discovered that according to a Pew Research Report, in 2022, Maryland had about 300,000 undocumented residents, and of those, 200,000 were unauthorized immigrant workers, or 6.5% of Maryland's labor force. These numbers have probably grown, but this data means Maryland is in the top six of states with the highest percentage of unauthorized workers along with Massachusetts, Washington, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, and Virginia. In Maryland, most of these undocumented workers work in the Construction industry followed by the Service occupations. We can also project that Maryland has many undocumented workers in the Agriculture/Farming areas and in poultry and seafood processing. And while nationally, there were about 11 million unauthorized immigrants in 2022, that was still below the peak of 12.2 million in 2007. Nationally, the majority of unauthorized immigrants are from Mexico (highest), Central America, Asia, and South America in descending order. So Based upon the percentage of undocumented workers in Maryland, massive deportation will have a negative impact on several key industries.

At the end of January, our Maryland Attorney General, Anthony Brown, along with 11 other state Attorney Generals pushed back against the current administration's Acting Deputy Attorney General who decreed that states must comply with the Executive Branch's immigration enforcement initiatives. Several State Leaders pushed back, stating that the Constitution prevents the federal government from forcing states to enforce federal laws. They stated that "It is well-established---through longstanding Supreme Court precedent---that the U.S. Constitution prevents the federal government from commandeering states to enforce federal laws. While the federal government may use its own resources for federal immigration enforcement, the court ruled in Printz vs. United States that the federal government cannot "impress into its service---and at no cost to itself---the police officers of the 50 States." Therefore, Maryland AG, Anthony Brown, issued new guidelines to all state, county, and local law agencies as follows (see 1/28/25 article in on-line Daily Times):

Maryland law enforcement officers:

- Cannot inquire about immigration status during routine police work unless relevant to a criminal investigation;
- Must not extend detentions to investigate immigration status;
- May share citizenship/immigration status with federal officials but are not required to do so;
- Cannot share personal information (names, addresses) with federal immigration authorities without a judicial warrant;
- Risk civil liability if they hold individuals on immigration detainers without probable cause; and
- Are prohibited from contracting with private immigration detention facilities.*

AG Brown further stated that Maryland law ensures police handle immigration enforcement in a way that builds trust with immigrant communities, helping them to feel safe to report and prevent crime. Locally, Sheriff Matt Crisafulli stated that his office is fully committed to upholding the rule of law, but that he feels ICE will not be targeting bus stops or schools. Their primary focus is criminal enterprises, criminal gangs, and other criminally related behaviors. He also stated that his local deputies intend to work collaboratively with all federal law enforcement agencies that may operate in the county at any point, but said, "Our primary mission is to ensure the safety and security of all residents of Worcester County." (see 2/6/25 issue of Bayside Gazette).

Worcester County is also fortunate because our local law enforcement does not have a 287(g) agreement with ICE, further indication that the WC Sheriff's office will be following the MD AG's guidelines. 287(g) agreements are formal agreements between ICE and local law enforcement for locals to cooperate completely with ICE and deputize local law enforcement as ICE agents. These agreements have led to many abuses, with racist police targeting marginalized communities. Frederick county has one of these agreements, and there are serious problems with aggressive police tactics being employed against the immigrant population.

In addition to local law enforcement's commitment to protecting citizens and children, the Worcester County Public School System (WCPS) has released a message and information to reassure parents and families that WCPS will strive to keep their learning environments free of disruption and provide guidance for principals and educators should ICE or another federal agency arrive at a school. Go to the WCPS website at www.worcesterk12.org/page/immigration-supports for specifics on guidance and resources for families. Some of the resources noted in recent Action Alerts from the DWC are CASA de Maryland, WOLC, Seton Center, IROC, MORA, HDCD, Rebirth Resource & Support Center, ILRC, ACLU, NILC, and United We Dream. Details are in the Action Alerts and the WCPS website if you want to volunteer or donate.

Next, the Maryland Legislature has introduced several bills to **support** the rights of immigrants, and several of those will be coming up for votes soon. The following bills need our support by calling or emailing our legislators: **(See also Feb 16 Action Alert)**

Protecting Sensitive Locations Act: SB0828—Immigration Enforcement at Sensitive Locations like school, hospitals, and churches; this act provides clear guidelines on ICE access to these locations. Judicial Proceedings Committee hearing is 1:00pm on 2/19/25.

Maryland Data Privacy Act: SB0977---State & Local Agencies--Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law—Restrictions on Access to Information; ensures immigrant families can access critical government services without ICE having access; this bill blocks ICE from obtaining warrantless access to state and local agency databases. Committee hearing was at 1:00pm on 2/10/25.

Ending 287(g) Agreements Act/Maryland Values Act: This bill terminates 287 (g) agreements; ending this program is essential in order to restore public trust.

There is one bill we need to **oppose:**

Rachel Morin Act: HB0085---State and Local Government---Sanctuary Policies and Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law; seeks to repeal existing prohibitions on law enforcement actions related to person's citizenship or immigration status; prohibits local jurisdictions from adopting sanctuary policies. Hearing is 1:00pm on 2/19/25.

Please call or email our legislators to support or oppose these bills:

Senator Mary Beth Carozza, 410-841-3645; marybeth.carozza@senate.state.md.us and

Delegate Wayne Hartman, 401-841-3356; wayne.hartman@house.state.md.us

Despite this regime's aggressive immigrant deportation attempts, we are not powerless. Our local organizations and agencies are doing positive things to support our immigrant population, and so we can also be an activist citizen. We can engage in the following ways:

**Lobby for and against the bills noted above;

Donate to local agencies supporting our immigrant communities---(see **February 9 DWC Action Alert for a list of those organizations);

Develop skills and gather information to directly support our immigrant residents both by **sharing tips on what to do re an ICE raid (**See February 7 DWC Action Alert**) and how to be an effective **Observer** if we see an ICE or police action (**2/7 Action Alert**);

Share the **CASA Raid TIPLINE at 888-214-6016 with your neighbors.

**Document or film any instances you see that might be an ICE Action---we observed an arrest at White Marlin Mall last month that turned out not to be an ICE action, but we let our local law enforcement know we are observing and interested.

**Writing letters to the editor in local newspapers.

If you want or need more details on any of the immigration issues discussed here, please contact the DWC PAC, Joan Roache at (beachyogi@me.com) or Gail Jankowski at (janfam83@gmail.com)

Bev Thomas