Dear Delegate or Senator -

As a member of Columbia Jewish Congregation and your constituent,  I urge you to support legislation that would address a number of inhumane practices endured by immigrants in Howard County as well as the state.   I view these proposed pieces of legislation as consistent with Howard County's reputation for progressive approaches to vulnerable populations, and see them as a remedy for existing policies that reflect poorly on our otherwise stellar reputation as a county that welcomes immigrants and encourages diversity.

Please support the following bills:

***Maryland Trust Act (SB88/HB304)***which will increase the safety of Maryland families by improving community relationships with law

enforcement and other state entities through limiting the state's partnership with national efforts to enforce federal immigration laws. This legislation would allow for vulnerable immigrants to be more willing to report crimes, use available health and social services for their families, and enroll their children in school. When individuals fear any contact with local agencies, this not only hurts them, but hurts our law enforcement efforts to identify dangerous criminals and it limits our health and human service agencies from providing adequate access to healthcare, education, and mental health services. In this time of covid, we need to assure immigrants that lining up for the           vaccine will not jeopardize their immigration status.  In a county and state where human trafficking is putting many young women-- many of whom are immigrants--in terrible danger, we need people from the immigrant community to feel safe reporting such activity.

***Driver Privacy Act (SB234/HB23)***which will require that ICE obtain a warrant before accessing personal information that the MVA keeps about a driver and will prevent officers from being allowed to search through personal information of Maryland drivers without explicit authorization of a judge. ICE has been using the MVA database to target and deport immigrant families, despite the fact that in 2013 legislation was passed by the state to extend driving privileges to every qualified person regardless of immigration status.  ICE has subverted the law's good intention of ensuring that everyone who needs to drive can do so in a legal and regulated way.

***Dignity Not Detention Act (HB 16)***which will end ICE's plans to build new detention facilities in Maryland (most recently near Baltimore County and now, Queen Anne's County.).  These detention facilities would be in addition to the three immigration detention agreements with local jails--INCLUDING HOWARD COUNTY. This bill would end all of these contracts and keep ICE detention out of Maryland. I am especially interested in the provision within this bill that would require local entities (***including Howard County***) to end

their contract by June 2021.

***Universal Representation (SB317),***which will ensure that all Marylanders who are in detention and facing deportation have access to competent, zealous legal counsel to represent them in removal proceedings.  This would also include access to counsel for Maryland residents detained outside of the state and provide community support and outreach to families of detained individuals and those at risk of detention.

     In addition to the above bills , it is essential that immigrant families, especially undocumented ones, be included in emergency pandemic

relief  and protections.  They have been on the front lines in healthcare and other critical service industries, yet they continue to be excluded from state unemployment, state healthcare, and the federal CARES Act.   I urge you to consider supporting inclusion of some of our most vulnerable individuals, regardless of their immigration status in the existing provisions for emergency pandemic relief and protection listed below.   It is not only a matter of being humane, it is also a matter of good public health policy.

***Covid-19 Eviction and Housing Relief***

***Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act***

***Direct Cash Relief to Impacted Families***

Thank you for your consideration of these bills.  I know this will be a challenging legislative session.  I am hopeful that Maryland can lead the way in reversing some of  the inhumane treatment of immigrants that we have experienced nationally over the past four years.