



Ensuring Justice and Safety for Immigrants in Howard County

The Howard County Coalition for Immigrant Justice is a group of immigrants, concerned organizations, and individuals working to support and protect our foreign-born friends and neighbors in Howard County. We believe all residents of Howard County deserve respect, justice, safety, and opportunities to thrive and prosper.

Extensive research (1, 2) shows that immigration is good for our country's economy with immigrants creating new businesses and jobs, revitalizing rural communities, and paying millions of dollars in national, state, and local taxes. Immigrants—both documented and undocumented—are less likely to commit crimes and less likely to be incarcerated than US-born citizens (3, 4).

Why does Howard County have an Intergovernmental Service Agreement (IGSA) with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE)?

Since 1995, Howard County has held an IGSA with ICE to house detained immigrants in the Jessup jail until they are deported, transferred, or otherwise released. **The major reason for keeping the IGSA is money.** ICE pays the County \$110 per day for each detainee. The County receives about \$3.8 million per year from ICE which is used for the annual jail budget of \$19.5 million.

Why should Howard County end the IGSA with ICE?

- The current immigration policies are heartless and unjust, routinely tearing families apart and deporting people who have lived and worked peacefully in the United States for decades. ICE is the enforcement arm of the policy. Since 2016, ICE's budget has increased from \$6.1 to \$7.6 billion and the number of detained immigrants has skyrocketed. In 2019, approximately 70,000 children were kept in detention, the most ever in history. ICE agents violate human rights and engage in racial profiling by targeting people of color for arrest and deportation. To date, state and local cooperation has been the key component of ICE's rapid detention expansion. As long as Howard County collaborates with ICE, we are complicit in a corrupt and racist system.
- While the Howard County Office of Corrections has labeled detainees in Jessup as a "threat to the community", they are holding people who have been charged but not convicted of a crime. The jail also detains people charged with minor traffic violations and not guilty of crimes against people and property. In addition, there are people in the Jessup jail who have already served time for their crimes and then have been moved into the ICE section of the jail.
- The Jessup jail may be a better jail than others, but it is still a jail. As long as Howard County continues to house immigrants, we are all complicit with a corrupt system. Unless communities refuse to collaborate with ICE, detentions will continue.

- While there are many lawyers working in Howard County, few immigrant detainees can afford legal representation. Capitol Area Immigrant Rights (CAIR) personnel visit Jessup regularly to provide information and, sometimes, legal representation. However, only 2 in 10 detainees in Baltimore immigrant court have lawyers. In practical terms, ending the ICE contract will reduce opportunities for legal representation for a very small number of immigrants.
- It has been argued that keeping the Jessup jail open makes it easier for immigrants to see their families. However, many detainees in Jessup are not from Howard County. Only 8 of the 65 immigrants detained in the Jessup jail on August 28, 2019 lived in Howard County. Almost one in three of the detainees on that day came from out of state. In addition, visitors to the jail must present a valid driver's license or government issued photo ID and provide a valid address. These requirements exclude many family members, even if the facility is close by. Detainees have access to skype and phone calls to their families but for a fee.
- Nationwide, state and local governments are ending their contracts with ICE, most recently, Norfolk, Virginia. Howard County needs to join this humanitarian action and be in the forefront for social justice.
- We cannot wait for Washington to take action. Change begins community by community. Local political action puts pressure on national leaders to act. In the face of clear human rights violations, we have an obligation to our foreign-born friends and neighbors in Howard County to work against unjust policies and laws.
- If we want Howard County immigrants to trust local government and police, we cannot continue to take money from ICE.

Why do we need County legislation to protect immigrant rights?

- Immigrants in Howard County are suffering from discrimination in the community and on the job. There is much anecdotal information as well as a small survey among 276 parishioners at St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church indicating that many immigrants face harassment, discrimination, and exploitation.
- At present, the Howard County Public School System and Howard Community College and the Howard County Police Department have policies protecting the privacy of foreign-born students and limiting collaboration with ICE. There are no policies protecting immigrants at other county agencies and departments.
- Immigration status is NOT a protected policy under the current Office of Human Rights Section 12.200-12.218 of Howard County Code.
- When immigrants feel protected, they are more likely to report crimes and otherwise cooperate with the police, making the entire community safer.
- Legislation protecting immigrants from arrest via administrative warrants will reduce prevalence of racial profiling in the community.
- Many immigrants—documented and undocumented—work in Howard County, pay state and federal taxes, and contribute to the economy and social welfare of Howard County. They deserve to feel safe in their homes and in public and to have the full protection of law.

Why should we add Immigration Status to the current Office of Human Rights Section 12.200-12.218 of the Howard County Code?

The true measure of any society is how well it protects its most vulnerable members. Immigrants are frequently exploited and less likely to report discrimination. We owe them access to all county services as well as protection and an avenue to file complaints.

What are the policies in other Maryland localities?

- Baltimore City and Baltimore and Montgomery counties have Executive Orders that limit collaboration with ICE, refuse ICE detainees unless they include judicial warrants, and prohibit refusing city services based on immigration status.
- Prince George's County Council has just passed a Trust Act to protect immigrants.
- Rockville and Hyattsville have passed City Ordinances with similar requirements.
- Annapolis, Brentwood, Cheverly, Colmar Manor, Greenbelt, Forest Heights, and Mt. Ranier have policies protecting immigrants.
- Baltimore City and Montgomery and Prince George's counties support Legal Funds for immigrants. Fairfax County, Virginia has just voted to create a fund.
- In 2018, Anne Arundel County ended its 287(g) contract with ICE.

References

1. The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Immigration. Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Academy of Sciences Engineering and Medicine, 2019.
2. Undocumented Immigrants' State and Local Tax Contributions. Lisa Christensen Gee, Matthew Gardner, Misha E. Hill, Meg Wiehe. Institution on Taxation and Economic Policy, March 2019.
3. Urban crime rates and the changing face of immigration: Evidence across four decades. Robert Adelman, Lesley Williams Reid, Gail Markle, Saskia Weiss, Charles Jaret. Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice. Volume 15, 2017 - Issue 1, December 18, 2016.
4. Criminal Immigrants in Texas. Illegal Immigrant Conviction and Arrest Rates for Homicide, Sexual Assault, and Other Crimes. Alex Nowrasteh.

Note: Data on detainees was provided by Jack Kavanaugh for community members touring the Jessup jail on August 28, 2019.