

MARYLAND IMMIGRANT RIGHTS PROTECTION TASK FORCE

INITIAL REPORT

JULY 15, 2026



INTRODUCTION

In response to concern about the prevalence of bad actors taking advantage of immigrant Marylanders and targeting them for predatory schemes and discrimination, Governor Moore issued [Executive Order 01.01.2026.11](#) on June 5, 2026, creating a statewide Immigrant Rights Protection Task Force ("Task Force"). This Task Force is chaired by the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs ("OIA") and comprised of State agencies, in partnership with the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Comptroller, and other state and local leaders.



As required by the Executive Order, this report describes the Task Force's initial assessment of fraud, scams, and exploitation targeting immigrant Marylanders. Additionally, it identifies the barriers and challenges these individuals encounter in the protection of their rights under state and local law. It draws from oral testimony shared by 20 community leaders at a community roundtable organized by OIA in May 2026 as well as written submissions shared with the Task Force. Community input was provided by non-profits providing services to immigrant communities, grassroots organizations, individual community members, and others. The report also draws upon input from state and local agencies, as well as local and national reporting and research.



The Task Force's initial assessment has revealed significant concerns about the proliferation of fraud, scams, and exploitation targeting immigrant Marylanders. Stakeholders described how immigrant Marylanders have long faced barriers to protecting their rights as workers, consumers, tenants, and victims of crime. They also described how an increase in federal immigration enforcement, federal immigration policy changes, growing demonization of immigrants of color, and increasing financial pressures have

led to greater uncertainty and isolation for many immigrants, providing additional opportunity for bad actors to take advantage and exploit them.

- Advocates for workers described how fear of retaliation and immigration enforcement, on top of challenges navigating state agency processes, inhibits immigrant Marylanders from reporting workplace violations, including wage theft, unsafe conditions, and discriminatory employment practices to state and local authorities.
- Advocates for tenants described how fear of retaliation and immigration enforcement, on top of high costs and a lack of language access, have undercut immigrant renters' stability and safety in the rental housing market, exposing them to heightened risk of exploitation and eviction.
- Immigration legal service providers and consumer advocates shared how individuals and families urgently seeking immigration legal help encounter a marketplace filled with scams and increasingly sophisticated fraud schemes, with low awareness of how and where to seek help as consumers.

- Victim services organizations provided testimony about how abusers and perpetrators leverage fear of immigration enforcement as a tool of control and intimidation against immigrant domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking survivors.
- Community leaders flagged increasing economic instability and mental health strains facing immigrant families, as families are separated, immigrants' ability to work is eroded, and they face heightened barriers to health care, basic financial services, and public programs and services. Leaders especially flagged challenges facing immigrant communities on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

All Marylanders have an interest in immigrant Marylanders' ability to secure their civil rights and their rights under state law as workers, tenants, consumers, and victims of crime. Robust worker and tenant rights enforcement prevents low-road employers and landlords from gaining an unfair advantage and prevents distortions of labor and housing markets that hurt working families, immigrant and U.S.-born alike. Consumer protection shields consumers from unfair, abusive and deceptive trade practices and ensures a level playing field among businesses. Ensuring that victims of crime are able to report a crime helps hold criminals accountable and makes our communities safer.

The information presented in this report is a starting point. Some areas need further development. Over the next 12 months, the Task Force will continue to engage stakeholders about common barriers and challenges to rights protection faced by immigrant Marylanders. This engagement will inform the group's efforts to identify and implement strategies to strengthen multilingual outreach and rights education, investigations and enforcement, and coordination and referrals among agencies.

BACKGROUND

1. MARYLAND'S IMMIGRANT POPULATION

Maryland is home to a large and diverse foreign-born population. More than one million immigrants reside in the state, representing roughly 17 percent of the population or one in six Maryland residents. While most immigrant Marylanders (about 55 percent) have naturalized to become U.S. citizens, about 45 percent are not U.S. citizens.

Across citizenship and immigration statuses, the vast majority of Maryland's immigrant population has significant community ties, with approximately **65 percent of foreign-born residents having lived in the U.S. for over 15 years.** **One in three children** in the state has at least one immigrant parent. Moreover, approximately **81,000 U.S. citizen children** in Maryland (about six percent) live with at least one undocumented parent.

Immigrants are vital contributors to the state's economy. Immigrant Marylanders comprise nearly **22 percent of the state's labor force**, with significant populations working in construction, general services, arts/entertainment/hospitality/food services, health care and social assistance, transportation and warehousing, and STEM fields. Immigrants also make up **30 percent of entrepreneurs** in the state.

Maryland's immigrant population is diverse in its language skills and formal educational background.

More than **1.2 million** Maryland residents speak a language other than English at home, and approximately **eight percent of Marylanders have limited English proficiency**, meaning they speak English less than “very well.” Among Marylanders with limited English proficiency, the most common languages are **Spanish, followed by Chinese, Korean, French, and Amharic**. About 20 percent of foreign-born Marylanders over age 25 have less than a high school education, about 36 percent have a high school degree and some college, about 20 percent have a bachelor’s degree, and over 23 percent have a graduate degree.

2. STATE LAW PROTECTIONS

Key rights protections under Maryland state law are inclusive of all Maryland residents, including immigrants. This breadth supports important policy goals for maintaining public safety and minimum standards across markets. For example, all workers in the state, regardless of immigration status, are protected by workplace rights, including **minimum wage and overtime, safe workplace** protections, and **workers compensation**. Similarly, all tenants have rights under Maryland law, and landlords are prohibited from retaliating against tenants by threatening to notify law enforcement about immigration status. Under state law, it is a **crime** to threaten to report a person’s immigration status in order to obtain anything of value from the person. Additionally, all **consumers** are protected under state law from unfair, deceptive, or abusive trade practices by merchants in consumer transactions, including landlords.

Victims of crime in Maryland, regardless of immigration status, also have **rights**, which are meant to support their safety, dignity, and access to information and services. Victims must be **informed of their rights and available services**. This includes access to services for sexual assault survivors such as **Sexual Assault Forensic Exams**.

In addition to broad rights protections that cover all Maryland residents, state lawmakers have also taken steps to support access to public services for populations in the state that may face specific barriers. For example, recognizing how a lack of language assistance can inhibit access and engagement with public services for Marylanders with limited English proficiency, the State in 2025 enacted **House Bill 1473—Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency and Individuals with Disabilities**—which requires certain State departments, agencies, and programs to provide equal access to public services for individuals who do not speak English very well and to people with disabilities. In recent years, the State has also enacted a number of additional laws intended to support immigrant access to essential services, including the **Maryland Values Act of 2025** and **2026, which address sensitive locations in the state**, and the **Community Trust Act**, which **addresses the use of state and local resources for civil immigration enforcement**.

THREATS TO IMMIGRANT RIGHTS PROTECTION IN MARYLAND

In Maryland and nationally, many immigrants have long faced barriers to protecting their rights as workers, as consumers seeking legal services, as tenants, and as victims of crime. Indeed, concern about rights protection among immigrants has driven a number of federal actions in the past. The Federal Trade Commission has a history of working to **educate** immigrant consumers about immigration scams and taking **enforcement** action against fraudsters. A number of federal agencies have worked together in **past administrations** to support effective enforcement of labor and employment law among immigrant workers, including the **National Labor Relations Board**, the **U.S. Department of Labor**, and **the Department of Homeland Security**. The **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission** and the

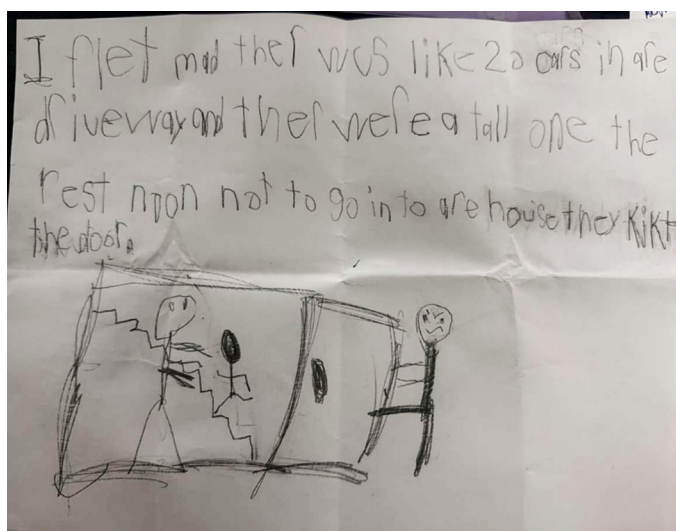
Department of Justice's **Civil Rights Division** have enforced federal statutes protecting immigrants from employment discrimination. In addition, federal immigration authorities have historically **recognized and adjusted for** the potential impact that immigration enforcement may have on the willingness and ability of victims and witnesses of crime, including domestic violence survivors, to call the police and pursue justice.

Stakeholders described to the Task Force how the current federal administration has de-prioritized and/or withdrawn prior federal policies meant to encourage immigrant reporting of crime and to facilitate the investigation and enforcement of rights violations. At the same time, an increase in federal immigration enforcement, other federal immigration policy changes, growing demonization of immigrants of color, and increased financial pressures have led to greater uncertainty and isolation for many immigrants, creating a perfect storm of conditions for bad actors to take advantage of immigrants.

1. CHANGES IN FEDERAL IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

ICE arrests in Maryland have increased dramatically since the start of 2025, with a notable shift toward arrests conducted in communities, impacting individuals without criminal histories.

Between January 2025 and March 2026, ICE conducted 6,596 arrests in Maryland, a 257 percent increase over the 1,846 arrests recorded during the same period one year prior (January 2024 to March 2025). Increasingly, federal immigration officials are apprehending individuals in the community. Over 73 percent of ICE arrests from January 2025 to March 2026 were characterized as “non-custodial,” meaning they were conducted at places like worksites, neighborhoods, or on the streets. Of these non-custodial arrests, about 72 percent of individuals did not have any criminal convictions or pending criminal charges.



A drawing by a Maryland child submitted to the Task Force depicting the arrest of his family member by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The increase in visible immigration enforcement has led to widespread fear among immigrant families as well as concerns about privacy, the use of racial profiling, and accountability for federal officer overreach. In Maryland and elsewhere, even U.S. citizens have been arrested by ICE. In late May 2026, the Department of Homeland Security dismissed removal proceedings against a **Maryland-born resident, Dulce Conseulo Diaz Morales**, who had been arrested by ICE in December 2025 leaving a Baltimore restaurant.

Increased enforcement has led to significantly higher demand for immigration legal services, at a time when affordable, reliable legal assistance is in limited supply and families must often seek assistance on very short timelines when a loved one is detained.

2. CHANGES TO FEDERAL IMMIGRATION POLICY

In addition to heightened and more visible immigration enforcement activity, immigrant Marylanders

have also been affected by significant changes to federal immigration policy since January 2025 which have created new uncertainty for immigrants.

Immigration policy changes have created instability of status for tens of thousands of Maryland immigrants, threatening their ability to remain employed and making many vulnerable to family separation. In the first year of the current federal administration, **an estimated 1.6 million immigrants** in the U.S. lost work authorization and protection from deportation due to “de-legalization” policy changes restricting or terminating immigration programs such as Temporary Protected Status (“TPS”) or humanitarian parole. Maryland has **over 30,000 residents living and working in the state with TPS**. Further, even immigrants who continue to have access to some form of immigration status, such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) or even permanent residence, have faced **adjudication pauses** and **extreme processing delays** in their applications.

Federal policy changes have made already vulnerable immigrant populations even more exposed to potential harm. In 2025, the administration attempted to rescind policies designed to identify and protect immigrant survivors of domestic violence and other victims of crime from immigration enforcement. While the policy change has been temporarily paused due to litigation, advocates and service providers have nevertheless noted increased fear and distrust among immigrant survivors and crime victims.

The Trump administration has also taken steps that have restricted or chilled immigrants’ ability to access basic services to manage their money. In May 2026, President Trump issued an **executive order** requiring federal financial regulators to revise rules and take other actions limiting access to deposit accounts, loans, and other basic financial services for non-citizens. The move and **subsequent federal actions** have prompted **warnings** that millions of immigrants could be cut off from the financial system and **effectively de-banked**, with serious risks to public safety and families’ financial security, as well as **increased burdens** on banks and credit unions.

3. A RACE TO THE BOTTOM

In written and oral testimony, community leaders repeatedly emphasized how increased immigration enforcement and federal immigration policy changes have created additional opportunities for bad actors to take advantage of immigrant Marylanders. These changes compound other longstanding barriers to rights protection—including a lack of information about existing rights under state and local law and a lack of language access for individuals with limited English proficiency—to increase immigrants’ isolation and reluctance to report violation of their rights, emboldening rights violators.

 **It felt like the law and our rights did not exist for people like us.”**
– *Anonymous family*

Service providers shared examples of mixed-status families hesitant to engage in routine interactions with government and private institutions, from single mothers scared to apply for child support, to families afraid to file tax returns, to families reluctant to seek college financial aid opportunities for U.S. citizen children.

“We have not experienced any threats or harm from any Maryland related agency, but the result of harmful policies impacting immigrants on a federal level, is that many immigrant clients, served by HIAS, are unable or unwilling to access state benefits or resources for which they may be eligible, out of fear of detention, deportation, and other harms.” – HIAS

Community leaders singled out challenges faced by immigrants in protecting their rights in the workplace and in housing, and noted the negative impact on other workers and tenants.

Workers rights

Labor unions, advocates, and researchers have observed that workplace exploitation of immigrants can harm native-born workers, suppressing wages, undermining working conditions, and encouraging a “race to the bottom” among employers. Federal immigration authorities have also recognized how immigration enforcement can conflict with labor rights enforcement for all workers.

Despite this, immigrant workers in Maryland face barriers to protecting their workplace rights, often because most state and local efforts are driven by worker-filed complaints. For many immigrant workers, concerns about employer retaliation and immigration enforcement impact their ability to file and pursue complaints with state and local agencies. Community leaders, service providers, and advocates shared experiences and observations with the Task Force about immigrant workers reluctant to come forward to address wage theft, employment discrimination, substandard working conditions, and other workplace rights, due to fear of job loss and/or immigration enforcement. These fears impact both undocumented workers and those with lawful work authorization.

Even when immigrants do take steps to address workplace rights violations, they may not follow through. The Public Justice Center’s Workplace Justice Project shared that immigrant workers have withdrawn their request for legal assistance due to fear of retaliation and immigration enforcement.

In addition, We are CASA, the National Domestic Workers Alliance, and Centro de los Derechos del Migrante shared ongoing challenges that immigrant workers face in navigating workplace rights claims due to limited language access, a lack of familiarity with rights

“What we are hearing more and more regularly from [clients]—especially those from Central American countries—is that they are afraid to speak up and advocate for themselves out of fear of retribution. Even those with lawful work authorization or some other legal status, are afraid of telling employers when they get hurt or have other medical issues because they don’t want to get laid off and don’t want to risk employers calling ICE. Even those that may have sick leave available to them, don’t take it for fear that they won’t be paid and might not be able to pay their rent, or that employers will retaliate against them for taking time off.”

– HIAS

“I recently did intake with the family of a child with a disability. They are struggling to pay the rent. Dad lost his job several months ago when he got injured (at a landscaping job). Several months later he is still physically impacted by his injury and unable to work in the same capacity as before. I asked whether he had asked his employer about worker’s comp insurance and he quickly responded to say, ‘no, I am not interested in following up on that.’ This dad does not have a legal status and is likely fearful about how accessing that benefit or speaking up in the workplace could impact him negatively.”

– Jubilee Association of Maryland

under state law, and confusion regarding labor enforcement agency processes and timelines.

These stakeholders emphasized the significant contributions of immigrant workers to key Maryland industries—including caregiving, construction, janitorial, security, and agriculture—and the impact on thousands of Maryland workers from the termination of immigration programs like TPS.

They also flagged the vulnerability of migrant workers on temporary visas, whose legal status is tied to a single employer, and who generally work in agriculture and in rural areas of the state.

Tenants rights

Community partners also raised concerns about how heightened immigration enforcement—combined with pervasive affordability issues—have undercut immigrant renters' stability and safety in the rental housing market and have limited or undermined tenant organizing efforts. Rent increases, economic uncertainty, and fear of immigration enforcement expose immigrant renters to the **heightened risk of exploitation in housing**, despite **legal protections for tenants**, including a prohibition on retaliatory threats by landlords to notify immigration enforcement.

“**[O]ur outreach staff in Anne Arundel County have observed over the past year that immigrant renters were more reluctant to voice their concerns about unsafe housing conditions and negligent landlords and appeared to passively accept abrupt rent increases that violated their lease terms. Our staff observed instances in which landlords retaliated against tenants by calling immigration enforcement after the tenants complained about substandard housing conditions.**” – *Maryland Legal Aid*

Community partners described immigrant tenants being charged higher fees or security deposits than other tenants but being reluctant to challenge housing providers about these practices. Language barriers and limited language access in applications for housing can also pose a barrier for immigrants, limiting their options.

A lack of language access in the eviction process also impacts immigrant tenants.

“Migrant workers in Maryland confront significant barriers in defending their workplace rights. First, migrant workers often work in Maryland's rural communities, far from health, legal, and other social services providers. Second, many migrant workers are prevented by federal law from receiving publicly funded legal services. This exclusion—which intentionally limits migrant workers' access to justice—prevents many migrant workers from seeking legal aid to defend their workplace rights when their employers commit wage theft, discrimination, and other abuses. Finally, migrant workers often have little accessible information about their workplace rights under federal and state law.”

– *Centro de los Derechos del Migrante*

“In Baltimore City, a Spanish-speaking client and her family were evicted and lost their personal belongings, vital documents, and cash savings, in part, because her eviction notice was printed only in English. In Montgomery County, we attempted to assist recently settled Afghani refugees who were facing eviction. Because key documents, ranging from the lease agreement to the account statements to the county papers were in English, these households had no understanding of their obligations or their rights. Unfortunately by the time we met these tenants, they had missed critical opportunities to stop the eviction process.”

– *Maryland Legal Aid*

4. VULNERABILITY TO FRAUD, SCAMS, AND ABUSE

Across testimony, community partners alerted the Task Force to the emergence of a concerning pattern: immigrant Marylanders are being increasingly targeted by predatory actors who exploit their vulnerabilities.

From financial exploitation and consumer fraud to domestic violence and sexual assault, these bad actors seek to take advantage of many immigrants' isolation, counting on factors including language barriers and fear of immigration enforcement to evade accountability.

“Many immigrant clients are reluctant to report crimes due to concerns that information may be shared with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Underreporting crimes—including serious offenses—leaves individuals more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and trafficking, while undermining public safety.” – Kids in Need of Defense

Immigration legal services scams and fraud

Immigration legal service providers and consumer advocates described a large and growing landscape of immigration legal services fraud and scams, causing significant financial harm to families and putting many at risk of detention and deportation. Their testimonies underscored how individuals and families urgently seeking immigration legal help encounter a marketplace filled with scams and increasingly sophisticated fraud schemes.

While low-quality and fraudulent immigration legal services has long been a problem, a number of **recent reports** have highlighted increased immigration scams as a growing problem, with the potential for significant financial harm and dire consequences for families. These scams have increased as demand for immigration legal assistance grows. Esperanza Center in Baltimore City noted to the Task Force that its immigration legal services practice has 1,300 clients with a waitlist of over 1,000 who had to be turned away due to lack of capacity. Project End of Ayuda—one of the few non-profit providers in Maryland that specifically addresses the legal and financial damages of immigration legal fraud—also testified to the vulnerability of immigrants with limited English proficiency who lack an understanding of the complex immigration process.

In testimony shared with the Task Force, Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center described meeting with many clients who have been scammed by unscrupulous providers, leading to loss of money and sometimes serious immigration or even criminal consequences. Global Refuge shared an example of a client that paid \$13,000 for filing assistance that was never provided.

Immigration scams and fraud are not just limited to non-lawyer “notarios.” Immigrants are also harmed by lawyers who are unqualified or deceptive in their provision of legal services. In one written testimony to the Task Force, an anonymous family described paying an attorney \$4,000 for representation, only to be told after a hearing that new counsel was required; a subsequent attorney solicited \$7,500 and obtained \$1,000 before the family began to suspect fraud. In a case drawing national attention, an attorney in Washington state recently surrendered her law license for **promising “miracles”** to tens

of thousands of immigrants, including Maryland residents, and allegedly creating fake stories in immigration applications without her clients' knowledge.

Legal service providers and consumer advocates have described the emergence of more sophisticated impersonation schemes, in which scammers impersonate legitimate lawyers or non-profit organizations using official logos and the names of real attorneys to target immigrants via social media platforms. A legal service provider from World Relief provided testimony about how he was impersonated by scammers who created a fake website and used his information to offer fraudulent services. He noted that not only are immigrants victimized by these scammers, but so are the attorneys and service providers that the scammers impersonate.

Project End of Ayuda also testified to the rise in scams over social media, with payment demanded over apps like Zelle. Catholic Charities legal providers across the country, including in Maryland and the DC-metro area, have also confronted these social media-based impersonation scams.

Domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking

Community leaders and victim services organizations shared concerns with the Task Force about the risk of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking among immigrant communities, as abusers and perpetrators leverage fear of immigration enforcement as a tool of control and intimidation against immigrants. Stakeholders noted the weakening of congressionally established programs and rescission of longstanding federal policies by the current federal administration that were meant to identify and protect immigrant victims of crime, gender-based violence, and trafficking.

“**Look at the news—no one cares about you.**”

– *Abuser's remark, as reported by domestic violence survivor to Tahirih Justice Center*

The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (“MCASA”) shared stories from among their current cases about immigrant victims who were threatened with deportation by abusers. In one case, the organization believes the perpetrator reported the victim to ICE after the victim was granted a protective order, resulting in the victim's immigration arrest.

“Individuals posing to be from Catholic Charities DC, Catholic Charities (from other Archdioceses), Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), or other legal service providers have scammed individuals out of their money on Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp. ... The level of scams excels in sophistication with individuals receiving fake USCIS Notices/Immigration Court Decisions, and/or having to appear at fake virtual interviews or fake virtual Immigration Court hearings.”

– *Catholic Charities DC*

“[MCASA's Sexual Assault Legal Institute] is providing legal services to a young girl who was sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend. The perpetrator repeatedly threatened the child victim that if she ever told anyone about the abuse, that her and her mom would be deported back to their home country where they face persecution. Legal services help ensure mom has custody and the perpetrator must stay away, but the daughter is terrified that her disclosure will endanger her mother and result in her deportation.”

– *MCASA*

Tahirih Justice Center described a 200% increase in hotline volume from 2024 to 2025 and noted the negative effect of the current climate on immigrant survivors' willingness to seek help, which other providers echoed.

MCASA, the Tahirih Justice Center, and the University of Maryland Safe Center for Human Trafficking Survivors explained how the rollback of federal policies and practices instituted to support safe reporting by immigrant crime victims and trafficking survivors has resulted in reduced victim and witness participation in prosecutions.

“ ICE is no longer required to affirmatively try to identify that a person is a victim of a crime or consider the fact that a person may be a victim of crime when determining whether to take immigration enforcement action against them. This means that victims of sexual assault who are eligible for a U visa or other victim-based immigration benefits, or who have already applied, may be apprehended by ICE at any time. This means the key witnesses in criminal trials or child protective hearings will be unavailable to help with the case and—as a result—sex offenders go free and children and other community members are endangered.” – MCASA

Homeowner scams

Immigrant homeowners, particularly older homeowners with limited English proficiency, can be attractive targets for scammers, who exploit language barriers to trap homeowners into predatory contracts or other fraudulent schemes.

Maryland Legal Aid noted the targeting of immigrant homeowners for predatory scams, sharing an example of a family that experienced a house fire and was solicited by a company offering “disaster mitigation” services. The company approached the family in the middle of the night while their home was burning to offer clean up services, claiming the cost would be covered by insurance. They provided all documents in English, offered no translation services for the family members, who did not speak English well or, read or write English, and demanded immediate signature. The company later sued the family for almost \$10,000.

“An undocumented immigrant young man was drugged and raped by a man he did occasional yard work for. Following the rape, the victim endured months of harassment through countless texts and social media messages. He eventually lost his job at a restaurant after the perpetrator called and threatened an immigration raid of the establishment. The victim petitioned for and was granted a temporary protective order, but later that day was arrested by ICE, we believe because the perpetrator reported him.”

– MCASA

“[MCASA's Sexual Assault Legal Institute] is providing legal services to a woman who is suffering physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse at the hands of her U.S. citizen husband. She is afraid to report to the police for fear that her and her children will be deported back to their home country. She is also financially dependent upon her abusive husband because she does not have a work permit and he controls the finances. She fears going to a shelter because of the threat of ICE. We can and will provide this survivor with legal advice and options, but ultimately, she must decide whether reporting is worth the very real risk of deportation.”

– MCASA

Maryland Legal Aid learned from the insurer that such “disaster mitigation” schemes are a widespread scam affecting many households, including homeowners with limited English proficiency.

5. EMERGING AREAS OF CONCERN

Community leaders, service providers, and advocates also flagged a number of emerging areas of concern for the Task Force, warranting greater attention from state and local leaders.

Economic pressures and mental health strain

Community partners raised concerns about increased economic pressures and intense emotional distress for immigrant families.

A college professor shared the experience of one of her students, a U.S. citizen, who had a noticeable and atypical mid-semester academic decline and repeated absences. The student revealed that they had had to take on extra employment as both of their parents had been detained by ICE. The student was forced to maintain the household and take care of their younger siblings. “This was not only financially stressful, but was emotionally traumatic for them and their siblings.”

SEIU 32BJ emphasized the disastrous impacts of the Trump administration’s “de-legalization” efforts, particularly the termination of TPS designations, and how these have led to loss of work authorization, loss of employment, and loss of health insurance among many of its immigrant members with long work experience as airport workers, janitorial workers, and security guards. Maryland has one of the largest immigrant populations with TPS in the country, with some immigrants having built their lives working with authorization and raising families in the state for decades.

SkyPoint Federal Credit Union shared how the fear of immigration enforcement has prompted some small business borrowers to voluntarily give up trucks and vans used for construction and landscaping, prioritizing safety over their ongoing ability to earn a living. The credit union also shared that they are receiving increasingly urgent questions from immigrant account holders, from how to protect and maintain access to their accounts if arrested by ICE, to how to protect their children if detained, and how to pay rent if “disappear[ed]” from work.

SkyPoint flagged the safety risks posed by ongoing federal efforts to restrict financial access among immigrants.

“ Even the suggestion that banks or credit unions could be turned into immigration—screening points can cause families to withdraw [from banking], avoid mainstream accounts, and carry more cash—making them less safe and more vulnerable to theft and fraud. When trust is shaken, immigrant Marylanders are pushed out of the regulated financial system and into higher-cost, higher-risk alternatives.” – SkyPoint Federal Credit Union

Increased vulnerability of immigrants on the Eastern Shore

While community partners identified rights protection challenges impacting immigrants throughout the state, community stakeholders on the Eastern Shore raised particular concerns about challenges and risks facing immigrant communities in their region.

They described the Eastern Shore region as having limited services and supports for immigrants, limited language access options, and limited transportation options to help overcome the area's geographic isolation. Many of the region's Haitian immigrant families have also been significantly impacted by the end of Haitian TPS.

Community leaders described immigrant families experiencing growing housing instability, food insecurity, and mental health concerns. They have also expressed concerns about immigrants' vulnerability to workplace abuses or even labor trafficking, as people lose work authorization and are pushed to perform "under the table" work. Fear of immigration enforcement and family separation discourages many from seeking help.

CONCLUSION

Immigrant Marylanders play a crucial role in the economic, social, and civic vitality of the state.

The federal administration's mass deportation agenda hurts the state's economy and it has fueled an increase in fraud, exploitation and abuse of immigrant Marylanders, to the detriment of all communities.

The state has a strong interest in protecting all workers, consumers, tenants, and victims of crime. Over the next 12 months, the Immigrant Rights Protection Task Force will work closely with stakeholders to identify and address barriers and challenges to rights protection faced by immigrant Marylanders.

Strategies will reflect the input of stakeholders and include strengthening multilingual outreach and rights education, assessing how investigations and enforcement can better address concerns about retaliation, and improving coordination and referrals among agencies.

APPENDIX