

January 7, 2026

Rabbi Charles L. Arian

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF EXPEDITED BILL 35-25
Promoting Community Trust - Immigrant Protections Act

TO: Council President Fani-González, Vice President Balcombe, and members of the County Council

FROM: Rabbi Charles L. Arian

My name is Rabbi Charles L. Arian. I am a resident of Montgomery Village in District 7. I am submitting this testimony in support of Expedited Bill 35-25, Promoting Community Trust – Immigrant Protections Act.

I want to start by thanking Council President Fani-González and the Council Members who have co-sponsored this legislation. This legislation is a strong expression of Montgomery County's values. It is an important attempt to protect our community from the reign of terror which has been unleashed in the past year, not only against our friends and neighbors who may be undocumented but against our fellow citizens who are guilty of appearing to be Latino, or those of us who dare to speak up against and document the activities of ICE.

I am honored to have served as the rabbi of Kehilat Shalom Congregation in Montgomery Village for almost 14 years and counting. I am a member of the Social Justice Commission of my denomination, Conservative/Masorti Judaism and of the Clergy Cabinet of HIAS and of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights.

I am the grandchild of Jewish refugees from Czarist persecution. Growing up I heard many stories from my immigrant relatives of their journeys to this country and the hardships they encountered as immigrants. My paternal grandmother's older sister was denied entry at Ellis Island -- which is why I have many cousins in Mexico City.

I am concerned about protecting our immigrant neighbors because of my family history as well as Jewish values. The commandment to love and not oppress the stranger or immigrant is repeated 36 times in the Torah. My father's grandparents lived with his family when he was growing up; they never managed to learn English and did not become US citizens. Shortly before he passed away, my father was watching a television report about people trying to come to this country and being turned away, and said to me "when I look at those poor people, I see us."

There is sadly not a lot that local governments can do to protect their constituents from Federal overreach and brutality, but at a minimum County resources should not be used to make things even worse. We all suffer when immigrants are afraid to call the police, to testify when they are victims of or witnesses to a crime, to go to work or to their place of worship. **I urge the Council to pass Expedited Bill 35-25, Promoting Community Trust, quickly and without any weakening amendments.**