



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Shared voices for liberal religious values in Maryland

Data Privacy - Consumer Data, Public Records, and Message Switching System (Data Privacy Act), HB711 (SB504)

Favorable Report

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From: Jim Caldiero, Lead Advocate for Immigration, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of MD, Annapolis, MD

To: Del. Kriselda Valderrama, Chair, Del. Lorig Charkoudian, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony **IN FAVOR** of HB711, Data Privacy - Consumer Data, Public Records, and Message Switching System (Data Privacy Act)

Some 55 years ago, immediately after I took the oath of office with the Social Security Administration, even before I lowered my hand, I was read the agency's first regulation: the personal information entrusted to its employees is sacrosanct and under no circumstances is that information to be shared or disclosed unless authorized. It is obvious that now, a half century later, in an era of digitalization that our personal data is at greater risk and must be protected.

In recent years we have seen the national administration, in particular, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its subordinate agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement erode privacy protections that have led to fear and uncertainty in the immigrant community.

As Politico reports, we have seen in recent weeks a significant uptick in domestic surveillance by DHS not only against our immigrant neighbors but also against those who support them, including protestors exercising their constitutional right to free speech, to assemble, to petition their government. The national administration has given DHS unprecedented access to troves of sensitive data stored in federal agencies including the Social Security Administration, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and the Internal Revenue Service. Every inch of an individual's digital footprint is available for intrusion.

The release to ICE of personal data from Medicaid (CMS), is particularly worrisome as our immigrant neighbors may be reluctant to seek medical assistance and health care, thus creating a public health crisis endangering everyone in Maryland.

We must take steps to restore trust by ensuring that state and local agencies, as well as law enforcement entities, and third-part data brokers are prohibited from sharing personal information and facial recognition data with federal immigration authorities unless a valid judicial warrant is presented.



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We must also ensure accountability and transparency by requiring that agencies maintain records of all access requests and submit annual reports to the General Assembly.

I share my faith with more than 4000 Unitarian Universalists across Maryland. We affirm that every person has worth and dignity, and that includes the knowledge that one's personal information is secure from intrusion by a national government that might do them harm.

I encourage you to deliver a **favorable report** on HB711.

Thank you.

Sources:

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 20, Chapter III, Social Security, Part 401, Privacy and Disclosure of Information, https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/cfr20/cfrdoc.htm

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