

Good afternoon, everyone,

Thank you for being here today. My name is **Maureen Wambui**, and I stand here not just as a community advocate, but as an **African immigrant**, a **neighbor**, and a **proud Baltimore County resident** who deeply loves this community.

Just a few days ago, we got news that the County Executive, **Katherine Klausmeier**, signed an **MOU with DHS/ICE/Enforcement and Removal Operations**, without public notice, without council engagement, and without community input.

This decision effectively **removes Baltimore County's sanctuary status**, and for many immigrant families, it feels like the ground beneath them has shifted overnight.

As someone who works closely with immigrant communities, I've seen the fear that words like "**ICE**" can trigger, the silent panic that parents feel dropping their kids at school, the anxiety of a breadwinner heading to work unsure if they'll return home.

This MOU doesn't just impact policy, it impacts **people, families**, and the **trust** we've spent years building between communities and local government.

Baltimore County has long prided itself on diversity and inclusion.

We cannot allow fear to replace belonging, or bureaucracy to replace humanity.

Our immigrant neighbors, including myself, contribute daily to the social and economic fabric of this county. We are taxpayers, business owners, caregivers, students, and essential workers. We deserve to live with dignity and safety.

Our Community's Call to Action To our county leaders is to:

1. Conduct a community impact assessment to;

Evaluate how this MOU might affect **public safety reporting, school attendance, and local economic activity**.

Make that report public and use it to guide policy adjustments.

2. Create a Community Oversight Task Force;

Composed of **county residents from all backgrounds**, including immigrants, law enforcement, educators, and local business owners.

Tasked with monitoring implementation, reviewing complaints, and ensuring fairness in how the MOU is applied.

3. Recommit to inclusive community policing;

Train local officers on **cultural competency, trauma-informed engagement, and immigrant rights.**

Reaffirm that **county police serve to protect all residents**, regardless of immigration status.

4. Invest in trust-building programs

Fund initiatives that strengthen trust between the county government and residents — such as **language access services, legal aid clinics, and community resource fairs.**

As a community, we want **partnership—not punishment. Transparency—not secrecy.**

Humanity—not fear.

We believe in a Baltimore County that welcomes everyone, protects the vulnerable, and builds bridges instead of walls.

And as an African proverb reminds us:

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

Let us go **together**—as one county, one people, building a community where everyone feels safe, seen, and supported.

Thank you.