



MEDIA ADVISORY

Federal Appeals Court to Hear High-Stakes Challenge to ICE “Bait and Switch” Tactic Targeting Maryland Immigrant Families

Advisory for: Thursday, January 29, 2026

Livestreamed from Richmond, Virginia <https://www.ca4.uscourts.gov/oral-argument/livestream-oral-arguments>

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As ICE activity escalates nationwide, Fourth Circuit will hear appeal that could determine whether Maryland immigrant families can pursue legal status without fear of arrest and separation.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland will argue before the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in a landmark case challenging ICE’s long-running “bait and switch” practice of luring immigrants to required marriage interviews as part of their legal path to residency, only to arrest and deport them when they show up.

The hearing comes amid renewed and aggressive immigration enforcement nationwide, raising urgent questions about whether families who follow the law can safely pursue legal status, or whether federal agencies may continue using legalization processes as traps.

WHAT: Oral arguments before United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in challenge to cruel ICE “Bait and Switch” entrapment tactic *Alyse Sanchez v. Kristi Noem*, Appeal No. 24-6520

WHERE: Livestreamed from Richmond, Virginia
<https://www.ca4.uscourts.gov/oral-argument/livestream-oral-arguments>

WHEN: Thursday, January 29, 2026, at 9:30 a.m. ET

WHO: Michael Abrams, ACLU of Maryland Cooperating Attorney
David Rocah, Senior Staff Attorney, ACLU of Maryland

Attorneys representing Maryland families targeted by ICE's entrapment scheme

Why This Matters Now:

This appeal challenges a practice in which U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement allegedly weaponized legal immigration processes, specifically marriage-based interviews required by federal law, to arrest and deport people who were actively pursuing lawful residency with their U.S. citizen spouses.

Federal district courts previously ruled that this conduct violated the Constitution, the Immigration and Nationality Act, and the Administrative Procedure Act, and barred ICE from carrying out such arrests in Maryland. Those rulings have protected thousands of families from being detained at marriage interviews.

Now, the federal government is asking the Fourth Circuit to undo those protections.

At stake is whether immigrant families nationwide can trust the legal system, or whether complying with the law places them at risk of sudden arrest, deportation, and permanent family separation.

Background for Reporters:

The case traces back to ICE's 2018 arrest and rapid deportation of Wanrong Lin, a Maryland father of three who was seized in handcuffs during a routine marriage interview after USCIS confirmed the validity of his 14-year marriage to a U.S. citizen. A federal judge later issued an extraordinary emergency order condemning ICE's conduct and requiring the government to return Mr. Lin to the United States from China.

Despite that ruling, ICE continued the practice, prompting a broader class action, *Sanchez v. Noem*, on behalf of additional Maryland families.

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