



Indivisible HoCo MD

Immigration Team

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CORRECTIONAL SERVICES - IMMIGRATION DETENTION - PROHIBITION (DIGNITY NOT DETENTION ACT)

Judicial Proceedings Committee
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Dear Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Howard County Indivisible urges you to give a favorable report to SB850, the Dignity Not Detention Act and keep Maryland free from the business of detaining immigrants. I am co-chair of Howard County Indivisible's Immigration Action Team. Howard County Indivisible has 705 members and our organization is a proud member of the Howard County Coalition for Immigrant Justice, a coalition of organizations calling on county officials to end our county's contract with ICE.

We believe that families belong together and that justice starts locally. In Howard County, we have seen how ICE has created large loopholes to justify detaining innocent people while defining them as "criminally involved." They tell our officials that we will only be housing detainees that are violent and dangerous to society. In truth, we have learned that they are a dishonest organization, detaining individuals with traffic violations or for crossing the border. These lies as well as the inhumane treatment of immigrants by ICE, the separation of children from their parents, and their practice of racial profiling are all compelling reasons not to work with such an abhorrent organization. These practices will only stop when state governments and local governments refuse to be complicit with their actions.

We suggest that instead of wasting taxpayer money, Maryland agencies offer to provide support and case management to immigrants. Some of the alternatives to detention include regulated and mandated check-ins with law enforcement, communication with authorities by telephone, linking families to community-based psychosocial services, or electronic monitoring of some individuals. Studies show that asylum seekers are very compliant in appearing for their immigration court hearings.

For example, the Family Case Management program was highly successful with the families present for hearings over 99 percent of the time. As stated by many law enforcement officials, immigrant families are not threats to national security. Furthermore, there is a consensus that incarcerating asylum-seeking families does not make our communities safer. Using alternatives to family detention saves taxpayer dollars and creates opportunities to reinvest detention budgets to more productive programs. In fiscal 2018, it cost ICE over \$200 per day to keep a family in detention; detaining a person in a specialized family detention is more than \$300. Alternatives to detention cost only around \$5 or \$6 per person. Perhaps more important, alternative programs do not result in detaining very small children, taking children away from their parents, or implementing policies that violate basic American values. (Frances)

Profiting off of the incarceration of people is immoral and encourages poor quality of care in exchange for profit. Maryland is better than this. We must find the willpower to protect our immigrant neighbors and refuse to collaborate with ICE.

The State of Maryland should lead the way in standing up to tyranny, violence, racism, and bigotry. I do not want my immigrant neighbors to go to jail needlessly and watch their families in anguish. Instead we should show compassion for our immigrant neighbors as they endure this terrifying experience in our nation's history and for our own sakes, lest we lose our very humanity.

Please give this bill a favorable report.

Francis, Will, et al. "Social Justice Brief." National Association of Social Workers, 2018, www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=9diqjSxR4Ik%3d&portalid=0.