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Judicial Proceedings Committee

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**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

**Senator Charles E. Sydnor III**  
**Testimony Regarding SB 850 – Correctional Services –**  
**Immigration Detention – Prohibition**  
**Before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**  
**On February 26, 2020**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

As we speak, Immigration Customs and Enforcement are currently holding over 38,000 immigrants in facilities across the United States.<sup>1</sup> On average, ICE detains more than 44,000 immigrants in over 200 detention facilities.<sup>2</sup> ICE relies heavily on state and local governments in partnership with private companies to detain immigrants and run its facilities. In fact, the vast majority of ICE detention facilities are privately run. SB 850 is an effort to keep these detention facilities out of our communities and to stop sponsoring an industry built on the inhumane treatment of immigrants.

Immigration Centers of America (ICA) is currently bidding to build an immigrant detention facility in Maryland. ICA runs a facility in Farmville, Virginia, that has been cited for serving worm-infested food, withholding medical treatment, denying access to legal representation, throwing people into solitary without cause, and failing to contain contagious illness outbreaks multiple times. Unfortunately, immigrant detention facilities like this ICA facility are not rare. Privately-run immigrant detention facilities like ICA facilities are deeply immoral institutions. Operators of these institutions have an incentive to provide a minimal standard of living because it increases their profit margins. In addition to the aforementioned problems, companies that run private detention facilities often violate labor laws, exploiting immigrants and using forced labor.

What is more, dozens of people have died at these detention facilities. Fifty-six detainees died in ICE facilities during the Obama administration and 26 detainees have died during the Trump administration. There is no excuse for allowing individuals in the custody of the federal

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<sup>1</sup> Currently Detained Population by Arresting Agency as of February 15, 2020, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement Detention Statistics, retrieved from <https://www.ice.gov/detention-management>.

<sup>2</sup> ICE Average Daily Population. During Fiscal Year 2020, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement Detention Statistics, retrieved from <https://www.ice.gov/detention-management>.

government to die because of derelict confinement conditions. We cannot be complicit in this system by allowing these facilities to continue to operate in our communities.

SB 850 works to stop ICE from building additional detention facilities in Maryland, protects our immigrant communities, and ensures that no town, county, or corporation is profiting from family separation or incarceration. It accomplishes this in three parts. First, by banning any new contracts or renewals of existing contracts, this bill cuts off state and local governments' role in building and operating detention centers. Second, this bill promotes transparency and ensures that public the public is adequately informed by government officials when any plans for a new detention facility are to take place. Third, this bill prohibits state and local entities from entering into any new contracts or renewing any existing contracts for immigrant detention.

The Dignity not Detention Act will keep ICE and its contractors out of Maryland, protect our immigrant communities, and make sure that no town, county, or corporation is profiting from family separation or incarceration. We have an opportunity and an urgent responsibility at the state level to end our participation in this merciless, unjust system.

I urge the committee to vote in favor of SB 850.