



## **Testimony in support of HBo047: Public Institutions of Higher Education – Contracts – Prohibition**

---

Dear Representatives of the Maryland General Assembly,

University of Maryland’s organization Political Latinx United for Movement and Action in Society (PLUMAS) strongly urges representatives in the Maryland General Assembly to vote YES on HBo047, to ensure that public institutions of higher education cannot enter or renew contracts with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. ICE has facilitated and is complicit with various human rights violations and has no place in any form of contracts or agreements with public institutions that serve students and others with a variety of immigration statuses. Regardless of what the contracts entail, it calls the morals of an institution into question if they are willing to be connected with a group such as ICE.

A report released by the Congressional Committee on Homeland Security in September of 2020 compiled data from eight ICE facilities and over 400 people in ICE custody. It was found that “poor physical and mental health care, failure to protect people in detention from Covid, and constrained access to legal services and information” (Shah)<sup>1</sup> were rampant in ICE facilities. Treatment of immigrants by ICE has been dramatically called into question in 2018 during the Trump administration. Notable horrific events occurred such as terribly overcrowded cells in the Rio Grande Valley which inspectors described as “dangerous”<sup>2</sup> and the temporary placement of migrants in an outdoor holding pen in El Paso in which people had to sleep on the ground, given only thin blankets<sup>3</sup>. A man in one of these pens said that “They treated us like we are animals”. The American Civil Liberties Union called this “an extreme and unprecedented assault on their basic rights.”<sup>3</sup> In short, it is no secret ICE is notorious for its mistreatment of migrants which has not been ameliorated at all in the past few years.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/why-america-still-needs-abolish-ice-ncna1243293>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hamedaleaziz/photos-overcrowding-immigration-border-facilities>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.texasmonthly.com/news/holding-pen-migrant-families-shut-down-el-paso/>

How do you expect students, especially those who may be undocumented or have undocumented family, to regard an institution which claims to care them when it shares a contract with ICE? In terms of our and many other Universities, arguments in support of these contracts state that the contracts are only with the Homeland Security Investigations branch of ICE, not the Enforcement and Removal Operations. A response to this which echoes the sentiment of many Maryland students is one made by former PLUMAS president Paula Molina Acosta: "Even if it's not that particular branch, then another branch victimizes our communities like that and treats us poorly."<sup>4</sup> The contracts are used to allow UMD university researchers to present terrorism research to homeland security investigators in the name of cultural competency and counterterrorism training. Allowing these trainings was said to be academic freedom, to which English professor Drew Danial denies, saying "The idea that academic freedom should include the freedom to make money off of an organization that terrorizes people and is putting children in jail-like conditions, that doesn't sound like academic freedom to me."<sup>4</sup> To emphasize Daniels' statement on money, the contract gives UMD \$625000 so there is more than an academic incentive to have these contracts not just for UMD but many universities such as Johns Hopkins which has made over 7 million since 2008 from their ICE contracts.

It is inappropriate and immoral for an institution to profit off of organizations that have committed such as egregious acts against human welfare. Alternatives to these programs are available and should be considered. Just because these contracts are with a branch of ICE that is not concerned with deportation does not erase the fact that they are still very much connected. If MD institutions and in extension the MD government truly care about the safety and wellbeing of all its students, especially students who have undocumented statuses, this bill must be passed.

---

<sup>4</sup><https://www.npr.org/local/305/2019/10/21/771894848/maryland-universities-draw-protests-and-some-support-over-i-c-e-contracts>