

Feb. 10, 2026

Delegate Melissa Wells, Chair, Delegate Ken Kerr, Vice Chair, and Members of the Government, Labor and Elections Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony **in support** of House Bill 1018.

HB 1018 is a measured, necessary bill that does one fundamental thing: it ensures that any immigration detention facility operating within Maryland's borders — including large federal sites such as the proposed ICE facility at 16220 Wright Road near Williamsport — must meet Maryland's basic correctional standards for health, safety, and humane treatment once it holds civil immigration detainees. It does not attempt to nullify federal immigration law. Instead, it asserts Maryland's legitimate interest in protecting the lives and safety of people held here, and in safeguarding surrounding communities, within the limits of federal supremacy.

There are three reasons this bill is essential.

First, immigration detention facilities function in practice like jails and prisons. Detainees live, work, sleep, and receive medical care inside these sites for extended periods. It is inconsistent and dangerous to allow such facilities to operate in Maryland without being subject to the same minimum standards we already require of state and local correctional institutions. HB 1018 closes that gap by bringing immigration detention facilities under Maryland's correctional standards regime, with clear expectations for medical care, sanitation, use of force, reporting of abuse, and response to serious health threats.

Second, HB 1018 gives the State practical tools to prevent the worst harms before they become a crisis. By authorizing regular inspections, mandatory corrective action plans, and — in extreme cases — partial or full cessation of operations when conditions are life-threatening or health-endangering, the bill creates a graduated enforcement ladder. That structure encourages voluntary compliance but also ensures that the State is not powerless if an operator chronically fails to provide safe conditions. For a large facility like the Wright Road project, which is designed to hold hundreds or even more than a thousand people, these tools are not symbolic; they are essential safeguards against mass outbreaks, medical neglect, or systemic abuse.

Third, HB 1018 protects both detainees and the broader community in public-health emergencies. Recent experience during Covid-19 showed how quickly infectious disease can spread inside congregate settings and spill into surrounding communities when facilities lack adequate standards, oversight, or transparency. By explicitly subjecting immigration detention facilities to Maryland's correctional standards and inspections, HB 1018 gives state and local authorities a clear legal framework to enter, evaluate, and require improvements in medical and infection-control practices before a crisis spirals out of control. This is not about immigration policy; it is about responsible public-health and emergency preparedness in our state.

Importantly, HB 1018 respects the constitutional balance of power. It does not attempt to tell the federal government whether it may enforce immigration laws or where it may locate facilities. Instead, it sets baseline conditions for how people may be confined within Maryland, and how dangerous deficiencies will be corrected. That is squarely within the State's traditional police powers, and it reflects the same values we already apply to our own correctional system.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a **favorable report** on HB 1018. Maryland should not allow any facility — state, local, private, or federal — to detain human beings within our borders without being accountable to basic standards of safety, health, and humane treatment.

Thank you, Eileen Benecke, Frederick, Maryland

\*This testimony was drafted with assistance from Perplexity AI.\*