

My name is Eleni K. Dorian and I oppose HB0677.

This will effectively end federal immigration authorities from entering into agreements with private and government prisons to detain immigration-related persons. It will not alter the conditions of confinement but will dangerously increase threats to public safety, hamper future efforts to address increases in the criminal population, and hurt vulnerable populations that many in Maryland want to help. These are just some of the serious unintended consequences should HB0677 be passed.

Federal immigration authorities enter into agreements with private prisons because federal and state governments are typically unable or unwilling to fund new prison construction to keep pace with increasing prison populations. This bill would prohibit the federal government from using private facilities to house criminals while waiting for court. The legality of this prohibition is dubious.

Passage of HB0677 will not result in a reduction in federal immigration enforcement in Maryland or the release of currently detained immigrants as some immigrant advocates hope. Enforcement actions will continue, with those arrested, along with those currently detained, being transported to out of state facilities as far away as Texas, Alabama, and Louisiana, as ICE has done before to deal with detention shortages.

Detainees will no longer be close to family members. Legal counsel would be more difficult to obtain in other states where immigration attorneys are not that plentiful. Support of non-profit organizations will be scarcer outside Maryland. Ironically this bill will result in “family separations”. These prisoners should be readily available for meetings with families and investigative agents. If people are detained out of state, they are unable to appear in Maryland courts and their families and lawyers will not have easy access to them. All of this will certainly lead to expensive and complex litigation.

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