

February 7, 2021

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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB478**  
**Correctional Services – Immigration Detention – Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention Act)**

My name is Susan Keller, and I am a resident of College Park, MD. I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 478, the Dignity Not Detention Act.

I have lived in the 21st District since 1992 and I am a member of Mishkan Torah, a synagogue in Greenbelt, Maryland. Jewish tradition and teachings are very important to me, and as Jews, we are reminded to be kind to strangers, for we were once strangers in Egypt. Interestingly, this exhortation to be kind to stranger is mentioned more times in the Torah than is any other commandment. Like many people held in detention facilities in the United States, Jews have historically experienced persecution, hunger, and danger, so the issue of immigrant detention is personal for me.

The Dignity Not Detention Act is an important step Maryland should like to redress some of the injustices inflicted upon asylum seekers and other immigrants. The findings listed in the bill provide a strong basis for ending the practice of housing civil defendants in state-run institutions. Maryland has no obligation to provide the federal government with support in implementing immigration policy, and it should do all it can to divest itself from cooperation with ICE and its cruel practices of separating families and of detaining productive members of society.

I urge you to do the right thing and urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 478.

Respectfully yours,

Susan Keller