TESTIMONY FOR SB0478
CORRECTIONAL SERVICES – IMMIGRATION DETENTION - PROHIBITION (DIGNITY NOT DETENTION ACT)

Bill Sponsor: Senator Smith
Committee: Judicial Proceedings
Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante
Position: FAVORABLE

I am shocked and horrified by how intrusive immigration enforcement has become in our society and how the focus has changed to now consider immigrants and refugees as though they are all hardened criminals. More detention facilities have sprung up, and incarcerating immigrants has become a money-making proposition. That is not how we should behave. We should not profit off of someone else's pain.

Thinking, even for a moment, that having new detention centers will somehow make the incarceration conditions more favorable for immigrants is completely mistaken. What is happening in Maryland with immigrant detention is already horrific, as many of the people who visit immigrants in detention facilities have attested to. We cannot just turn a blind eye and think about the revenue implications. We must stop this practice.

This bill would prohibit local governments, counties or sheriff's offices from entering into contracts for detention facilities for immigrants in Maryland. It would also prohibit any entities from contracting with private firms to own or manage such facilities.

We need to close down the detention facilities that we already have that are run by private companies with little accountability and an eye towards making money. We need to re-think detention vs ankle bracelets or some other way of keeping track of undocumented immigrants while they are waiting to have their cases heard. Allow them to be productive citizens vs treating them as criminals.

We also need to be very wary of allowing additional incarceration infrastructure to be built in Maryland, as the long-term effects of that policy would be to have a state full of crumbling prisons and even more incarcerated immigrants. This is not who we are in Maryland.

I support this bill and I recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in Committee.