

SB 478/HB 16 – SUPPORT
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SB 478/HB 16 SUPPORT

Correctional Services – Immigration Detention – Prohibition (Dignity Not
Detention Act)

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee/House Judiciary Committee
February 10, 2021

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Today you consider SB478 (HB16). I believe that you have a unique opportunity to exercise your discretion and vote to side with love, to act humanely and fairly, and to keep Marylanders together safely and predictably in our State.

I am an Interfaith Minister in the region. I live in Montgomery County, District 16. As an Interfaith Minister, I am called to respect all who dwell together on this Earth. I faithfully believe that we cannot allow counties to profit from the inhumane and immoral detention of individuals who have committed civil immigration violations. I have witnessed the fear of our undocumented neighbors: fears of detention, family separation, deportation. Dona Rosa Gutierrez Lopez, who sought Sanctuary in Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church for two years, would never have needed Sanctuary if we were able to enact appropriate immigration reform, excluding the need for detention. I believe this will happen. In the meantime, allow our neighbors like Rosa to live free in the community while they await due process on their court cases. Detention is not THE answer to staying in touch with those who seek life in our country, in our state. We have seen so many cases of abuse and corruption in ICE jails, especially during this tragic pandemic. We cannot allow these facilities or contracts for ICE detention with local jurisdictions to be built or to continue. Allow families to be together. Allow those seeking hope in the US the opportunities to work, pay taxes, tend their homes, and wait until justice is served.

Please deliberate with compassion as this bill comes before you. Please return a favorable report for SB 478 and vote quickly on its passage.

With hope for peace and justice through love,

Rev. Charlene Belsom Zellmer, MDiv