

To: Senator Will Smith, Chair, and Members of the Judicial Proceeds Committee
From: Nadine Bernard (nadine.bernard@comcast.net)
Date: Feb. 7th, 2021

I am writing to you to urge you to support SB478 (HB16). This is the Dignity not Detention Act. During the last four years of the Trump administration, we have seen an active assault on immigrants. ICE has been detaining non documented immigrants, and they have been incarcerating them in facilities throughout Maryland and the rest of the country. I feel this is a money-making proposition feeding prisons a steady stream of immigrants who are black and brown in color, poor, and unable to defend themselves. They are constantly being moved from facility to facility which is part of the money-making scheme. This puts immense stress on the community at large, and the family in particular, for crimes that are commonly civil and not criminal.

Take Howard County Detention, in which 84% of the detainees are from Central and South America, 10% are from Africa, and 2% from other regions. This population is vulnerable to ICE and abuse by our system. ICE has been terrorizing immigrant populations with questionable practices. Our detention centers are not to be used for the ability to offset expenses in counties that justify they need the money. Detaining someone should not be about making money. Dehumanizing whole populations is immoral and fear and state-sanctioned violence is not a way to fix our defunct immigration system.

Please, do not exempt the three counties that currently have IGSA contracts. Howard County's detention facility has been cited by ICE multiple times for not meeting standards and nutrition programs. Being cited by ICE is a low bar and we should simply get out of the business of allowing ICE to hunt and detain immigrants in our county facilities. It is time to end all contracts with ICE and get Maryland out of the business of profiting from detaining the brown and black immigrants who have no ability to defend themselves. It truly is a disgrace for our state to be involved and as a Howard County resident I am appalled our local leaders condone this sort of behavior. From my observation, it appears to be about the money, are we back in the business of making money off the downtrodden?

Please support SB478 with no exemptions. Let's get this done!

Sincerely,
Nadine Bernard, Laurel, MD