

Testimony in Support of SB478(HB16) - Correctional Services – Immigration Detention – Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention Act)

To: Senator Will Smith, Chair, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Michael David (bionlaw@gmail.com)

Date: February 7, 2021

I am requesting your support of SB478, Dignity Not Detention Act. This law will prevent private or public entities in Maryland from engaging in immigrant-focused detention.

I am a resident of Howard County and have been actively campaigning to end Howard County's Intergovernmental Services Agreement with ICE. In July 2019 I had an opportunity to visit Howard County's detention center and observe conditions as well as interview immigrant inmates. The conditions were horrific and I particularly recall one immigrant who, after two years of detention, understood he will be expelled within the next two days. The conditions were so horrific and the lack of support and hope so dire that he was welcoming the end of his ordeal, even if this meant family separation. During this detention, the inmate did not work/provide for his US citizens family and was unable to earn wages that might have allowed him to hire an attorney. We must stop the harm we are causing by putting immigrants in detention. Nationally we need to create a more humane immigration system with a pathway to citizenship for undocumented people. Until that is completed, Maryland should not participate in or be complicit with the practices of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

ICE uses racial profiling to target select groups of immigrants that are overwhelmingly poor and people of color. I do not believe that Maryland should participate with organizations that engage in racist and dehumanizing practices. ICE has been terrorizing immigrant populations through its practices of separating families, arresting without valid warrants, forced sterilizations, forced labor, and spreading COVID-19. Fear and state-sanctioned violence is not a way to fix our defunct immigration system. No one in Maryland should be complicit with these practices.

Please do not support any exemptions for the three counties that currently have IGSA contracts. Howard County's detention facility has been cited by ICE multiple times for not meeting standards. Violations at our facility include using excessive strip searches, lack of medical care, and poor health and nutrition programs. It is time to end all contracts with ICE and get Maryland out of the business of detaining immigrants.

Please support SB478 with no exemptions.

Sincerely, Michael David, Columbia MD

410-370-2122