

**HB 16 - SUPPORT
CORRECTIONAL SERVICES - IMMIGRATION DETENTION - PROHIBITION
(DIGNITY NOT DETENTION ACT)**

House Judiciary Committee

March 3, 2021

Dear Chair and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I write to you in support of HB 16 Correctional Services – Immigration Detention – Prohibition, also aptly known as the Dignity Not Detention Act and urge this committee to support this legislation. Over the past four years, we have seen all too clearly the violence, neglect, and inhumanity perpetrated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the larger detention and deportation system. Personally, I have witnessed the cruel separation of families in our communities, the stress resulting from looming threats of arbitrary immigration enforcement, and dangers of criminalizing and incarcerating our friends and neighbors. Detention as an approach to addressing immigration is not only unnecessary, it is harmful and fails to make us safer.

Support for this bill at this time is pivotal. Private detention companies have proposed expansion plans into Maryland to run their substandard facilities that are known for mistreatment and human rights violations. As COVID-19 continues to spread across the country, detentions centers are often the worst hit due to racism, inhumane conditions, and consistent medical neglect. Thousands of people in ICE custody have contracted COVID-19 in 2021 alone.

At the Farmville Detention Center in neighboring Virginia, one can clearly see the horrors of participating in this cruel system. Farmville was the site of the largest COVID outbreak at a migrant detention facility in the country. Prior to the pandemic, there was a well-documented report of a mumps outbreak and a general failure to meet basic standards. There have also been reports of regular use of violence against detainees and cruel practices used in violation of individuals basic human rights. violations of individuals basic human and civil rights.

As a lifelong Maryland resident, educated in Montgomery County Public Schools and at the University of Maryland – College Park, I have been instilled with values of standing up for human dignity and resisting policies and practices that dehumanize our community members for the sake of profit and political maneuvering. As an environmental and human rights campaigner by profession, I know all too well the dangers of complicity in abuse: by keeping the door to our state open to ICE we risk losing the meaning of our democratic principles.

HB 16 – SUPPORT

Gaurav Madan

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HB 16 would remove the stain of collaborating with a rogue agency such as ICE, protect our residents and neighbors, and ensure that no municipality or business in our state is profiting off of the horrors of separating families through incarceration. The proposed legislation importantly phases out existing contracts facilitating immigrant detention, bans future contracts with private immigration detention companies at the local or state level, and keep the immigration detention machine out of our state.

At this pivotal stage in our country, we have the responsibility to continue to bend the moral arc toward justice. I like to think that Maryland is often ahead of the curve when it comes to issues of justice and fairness. We have a responsibility to ensure that basic dignity, respect for rule of law, and fundamental human rights are upheld in our state. I hope the Judiciary Committee upholds Maryland values and supports HB 16.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gaurav Madan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gaurav Madan