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

Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 3, 2021

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of organizers and supporters of Sanctuary DMV, we support HB 16 and urge this committee to report favorably on this legislation. Sanctuary DMV is an all-volunteer group that stands in solidarity with immigrant and marginalized communities based in Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia. Our mission is to support communities that are directly impacted by anti-immigrant policies and sentiments.

The passage and implementation of HB 16 is conducive to our goal of supporting directly impacted communities in the State of Maryland. Right now, our neighbors are suffering and dying in immigration detention across the state. Individuals in the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are routinely met with medical neglect, isolation, and abuse at the hands of detention officials. Passing this bill is particularly urgent in the time of COVID; as of January 21, 2021, almost 9,000 people have tested positive for COVID-19 in ICE custody, among an average daily population of around 14,195. The abhorrent conditions in immigration detention directly facilitate the spread of infectious diseases, which is why COVID is out of control in ICE facilities.

On behalf of ICE, many of these facilities are run by private entities such as Immigration Centers of America (ICA), which has pinpointed Maryland as a site for detention expansion. ICA's facilities have been cited for serving worm-infested food, withholding medical treatment, denying access to legal representation, and throwing people into solitary without cause. ICA-Farmville in Virginia was also the site of the nation's largest COVID-19 outbreak in detention, leading to the death of James Hill. This is not to say that publicly-run detention is better, in fact, Howard, Worcester, and Frederick County Detention centers have all been cited for violations by the Inspector General's office, and have also failed to control the spread of COVID-19. Sanctuary DMV has supported detainees and their families, and as such we can attest that immigrant detention - both private and public - is an incredible detriment to our immigrant neighbors in Maryland and across the country.

HB 16's provisions to 1) phase out existing local/state contracts fostering immigrant detention, and 2) banning any new local/state contracts with private immigration detention companies, will keep ICE and its contractors out of Maryland, protect our immigrant communities, and make sure that no town, county, or corporation is profiting from family separation or incarceration. HB 16 will drastically reduce the harm that ICE is able to inflict upon our immigrant neighbors, and will be a boon to the welfare of the State of Maryland as a result. We urge a favorable report on HB 16.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Galloway,
Organizer
Sanctuary DMV