



**Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 16 -
Correctional Services – Immigration Detention – Prohibition (Dignity Not
Detention Act)
Judiciary Committee
March 3, 2021**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) serves as the public affairs and community relations arm of the Jewish community. We represent over 100 Jewish organizations and synagogues throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The JCRC is strongly committed to cultivating a society based on freedom, justice, and pluralism. We work tirelessly throughout the entire Greater Washington area to advocate for our agencies that serve the most vulnerable residents, support our Jewish day schools and community centers, and to campaign for important policy interests on behalf of the entire Jewish community.

House Bill 16 prohibits the state or any local jurisdiction from entering into an agreement with a private entity to house an immigration related detention facility. The Bill also prohibits governmental entities from approving zoning variances or permits for the construction or reuse of buildings to house immigration-related detainees without public notification and requires governmental entities to terminate existing contracts for the detention of immigration-related detainees by October 1, 2022.

Deuteronomy 23:16-17 says, *“You shall not deliver unto his master an enslaved person that has escaped from his master unto you. He shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place that he shall choose within one of your gates that seems good to him; you shall not mistreat him.”* Beginning with that unyielding Biblical injunction and continuing throughout our people’s history, Jewish law and tradition have embraced the stranger and demanded that we help those in need. The JCRC has a long history of endorsing policy measures that provide support to immigrant communities. In fact, our long-standing immigration policy resolution states that we oppose state and local legislation that would direct local law enforcement agencies to seek out undocumented immigrants and to detain them for deportation by federal authorities. Their questionable lawfulness aside, we also state that such policies would not only be “meanspirited” and “inhuman” but counterproductive as well. Just as state and local governments should not initiate programs of this nature, neither should they be mandated – directly or indirectly – to carry them out at the federal government’s behest. For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on HB 16.

