



March 3, 2021

Honorable Delegate Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 101
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB16 – Correctional Services – Immigration Detention – Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention Act)

Dear Chair Luke Clippinger and House Judiciary Committee Members:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 16 entitled Correctional Services – Immigration Detention – Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention Act). CAIR is America’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

The United States’ immigration detention program, operated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement(ICE), is the largest of its kind in the world. Individuals in the ICE detention center are deprived of basic liberty, access to a lawyer, and access to loved ones. According to the CATO Institute, 21 people died while in ICE custody in 2020 alone.¹ ICE detention facilities endanger lives and reinforce a system of oppression counter to the democratic principles in our country. ICE has contracts with many local governments that it uses to operate its detention centers, including three here in Maryland in Howard, Frederick and Worcester Counties.

HB16 would:

- Cut off state and local governments’ role in either setting up a detention facility or participating in the continued operation of detention facilities
- Promote transparency by making sure that the public is notified of plans for a new facility
- Prevent state or local entities from entering into new contracts or renewing any existing contract for immigrant detention; compel existing contract to be terminated by June 2021

This issue is especially timely considering the harmful implications of these facilities during the current coronavirus pandemic. Our organization is opposed to the construction of more ICE detention centers in our state.

By passing this bill, Maryland lawmakers have the opportunity to make sure that no government entity or corporation profits from incarcerating immigrants. It would help reduce family separation and make sure that ICE and its contractors are not able to expand their reach in our state.

Passing this measure would send a clear message that the State of Maryland chooses to stand on the right side of history. We respectfully urge a favorable report on HB16. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Fatima Younis
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Council on American-Islamic Relations
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References:

1. Nowrasteh, Alex. *21 People Died in Immigration Detention in 2020*. <https://www.cato.org/blog/21-people-died-immigration-detention-2020>. Accessed January 22, 2021.