



**HB16/SB478 - SUPPORT
CORRECTIONAL SERVICES - IMMIGRATION
DETENTION - PROHIBITION
(DIGNITY NOT DETENTION ACT)**

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Takoma Park Mobilization urges a favorable report on HB16, the Dignity Not Detention Act. As a grassroots organization with over 2300 members, we work toward a just and equitable society; we work in partnership with organizations that represent the most impacted, while standing with the least powerful among us.

HB16 would stop immigration detention (public and private) in Maryland. How does this relate to Takoma Park Mobilization's core value of shared humanity? Among the most dehumanizing things you can do to someone is to lock them up. Privacy and basic choices (what to wear, what to eat, who to spend time with) are denied. Medical neglect, violence, and human rights violations are endemic. People who are detained can no longer provide for their families as breadwinners and/or caregivers, and can no longer contribute to their communities as workers and volunteers (in churches, schools, community sports leagues, and more). And detention is a form of family separation; approximately 6 million U.S. citizen children live with at least one family member who is undocumented, and after a raid or arrest, the majority of children display multiple behavioral changes as their family is thrown into turmoil.

HB16 is urgent; Maryland residents—immigrant and non-immigrant—cannot afford to wait for another session. Transparency in ICE operations and contracts is shockingly poor; even in Maryland, communities struggle to learn what's happening in their very midst. Medical and human rights abuses in ICE detention, including county facilities in Maryland, were researched and well-documented before COVID-19; detention has now become even more dangerous. ICE deportation, often following detention, has more deeply torn apart families and communities, and it has seeded COVID-19 outbreaks in vulnerable countries worldwide. Immigrant communities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, while contributing as essential workers to the systems that allow many others to remain safe. Being targeted by ICE is ever more cruel.

It bears noting that ICE has not always existed (it was established in 2003), and immigration detention was rare before the rise in mass incarceration in the 1980s and 1990s. A number of alternatives to detention exist, though each type needs its own examination; immigration detention is not inevitable, not necessary, and not humane. Maryland needs to recognize and reject this destructive trap.

We therefore urge a favorable report on HB16.

Submitted for Takoma Park Mobilization by Laura Atwood, laura_a79@hotmail.com, 301-587-3876, March 3, 2021