



**Legislative Committee/Immigration Issues Team
Columbia Democratic Club
Testimony on Correctional Services- Immigration Detention-
Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention)**

HB16/SB478

Bill Sponsors: Senator: Will Smith Delegate: Vaughn Stewart

Committee: Judicial Proceedings Committee; Judiciary Committee

Persons Submitting: Meagan Braganca, Legislative Chair Columbia Democratic Club

Position: Favorable

Dear Chairs Smith and Clippinger and Members of the Judicial Proceedings and Judiciary Committees,

The Columbia Democratic Club Immigration Team requests your support for HB16/SB478 Dignity not Detention, which will limit immigrant detention centers in Maryland.

The Columbia Democratic Club is the oldest and most active Democratic organization in Howard County, reaching more than 500 Maryland residents committed to electing Democratic candidates and advancing policy ideas. (<https://www.facebook.com/columbiademclub/>)

The Dignity not Detention Act (HB16/SB478) will go a long way to protecting all Maryland residents. HB16 will:

- Prohibit any new contracts or renewals of existing contracts with detention facilities operated by private corporations
- Ensure that the public is adequately informed about any plans for a new private detention facility
- Require local entities that already have an existing immigration detention agreement (IGSAs) to terminate the contract by June 2021.

Public and private detention centers have a well-documented history of abusing detainees and providing sub-standard care. A recent investigation of the Howard County Detention Center (HCDC) conducted by the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security reported: *violations of ICE detention standards that threatened the health, safety, and rights of*

detainees...We determined HCDC excessively strip-searched ICE detainees leaving their housing unit to attend activities within the facility, in violation of ICE detention standards and the facility's own search policy. <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2020-10/OIG-21-03-Oct20.pdf>

Anecdotal reports suggest that abuses also occur at in detention centers in Worcester and Frederick counties which also have IGSA with ICE

Maryland should not cooperate with nor profit from organizations like the Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) which engages in racial profiling, terrorizes communities, detains people without judicial warrants, and separates families.

Almost all the detainees in Howard County are from Mexico, Central America, and Africa. America has a long history of making money off Black and Brown people. We should not continue this cruel legacy in Maryland. According to the Howard County Detention Center Revenue Sheets from the ICE contract, the county made a profit of \$1.9 million in 2018 and \$2 million in 2019. These profits were enhanced by providing substandard meals, hygiene, and healthcare as documented by DHS. We should not profit from detaining human beings.

Public misconceptions as well as profit fuel support for detention centers. Far from posing a danger to the public, most undocumented immigrants are peaceful hard-working people who contribute to our communities. According to the American Immigrant Council and other sources, undocumented immigrants in Maryland paid an estimated \$373.5 million in federal taxes and \$242.3 million in state and local taxes in 2018.

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-maryland>

Detaining immigrants makes everyone less safe. Foreign-born residents and their documented relatives will be considerably less likely to report crimes or otherwise cooperate with police if they fear being detained and incarcerated. Cooperation will decrease with each new facility set up. Detained immigrants have less access to attorneys and cannot work to support their families and pay legal fees.

ICE is looking to build more detention centers in Maryland. We should not let this happen, and we should close existing detention centers.

The Columbia Democratic Club Immigration Team urges you to pass HB16/SB478 as written and create a safer, more inclusive Maryland.

Columbia Democratic Club Immigration Team

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