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Favorable Testimony for HB0016 Correctional Services - Immigration Detention - Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention Act)

To: Hon. Luke Clippinger, Chair, and esteemed other members of the House Judiciary Committee
From: Dianne Seiffert

January 22, 2021

My name is Dianne Seiffert, a 50 -year resident and homeowner in Montgomery County. I submit this testimony in support of HB0016 as the only acceptable moral and ethical position for Maryland State legislators to take to ensure that immigrant families will not be separated by detention in Maryland as part of ICE practice. Families belong together and free, not incarcerated while fighting for their immigration rights.

HB0016 would end state and local agency involvement in the cruel, immoral and counterproductive incarceration of immigrants and require transparency in any zoning or permitting decisions taken by local jurisdictions that enable private facilities for incarcerating immigrants within Maryland.

As a volunteer I have visited families of members held in detention and see how destabilized and traumatized the family unit becomes, even if members win release. I have visited imprisoned detainees and see the inhumane, demoralizing, and unhealthy conditions they are forced to exist in. Yet, we statistically know that over 90% of immigrants in the US who are subject to ICE check-ins faithfully report without incarceration; detention is unjustified punishment. And we know that the most valued goal for immigrants to the US is to be free of persecution from their home countries and to be legal, honest, hard-working, productive residents in America, often serving faithfully in essential work capacities and becoming entrepreneurs. Their loyalty to the US should be rewarded, not punished. I expect my State of Maryland to represent the best of America by codifying restrictions state-wide on private detention centers, and to end the cruel incarceration of Maryland immigrant residents.

I ask members to pass HB0016 out of Committee, and that Committee members individually and publicly declare your support to all House colleagues, and work to encourage all Delegates to join you in passage by the full House.

Respectively submitted,

Dianne Seiffert
Montgomery County resident
Chair, Immigrant Justice Ministry
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Member, Congregation Action Network