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AND PACIFIC ISLANDER CAUCUS
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March 3, 2021

To: Judiciary Committee
Bill: HB 16
Bill Title: Correctional Services – Immigration Detention – Prohibition
Position: Support

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice-Chair Atterbeary, and Judiciary Committee Members,

The Maryland Legislative Asian-American and Pacific-Islander (AAPI) Caucus is made up of Senators and Delegates in the General Assembly who seek to represent the interests of the AAPI communities in Maryland. As the fastest-growing racial minority group in the US, it is crucial that the legislative goals of AAPI individuals and communities are well-represented in Maryland public policy. Thank you for allowing the Caucus the opportunity to express our support of HB16.

HB16, Correctional Services - Immigrant Detention - Prohibition (The Dignity Not Detention Act), is a bill that would ban any new contracts or the renewal of existing contracts with detention facilities operated wholly or in part by private corporations. The bill would also ensure that the public is informed of any plans for a new detention facility to be built within the state, and requires that local entities with existing Intergovernmental Service Agreements (ISGAs) terminate those contracts by June 2021. It is a bill that imposes a mandate on units of local government.

According to reports from the Asian American Justice Center, an estimated 1.7 million Asian immigrants in the U.S. are undocumented. Rather than spending tax dollars on the criminalization and mass incarceration of immigrants and ripping families apart, our country should invest in the wellbeing of our communities, including immigrant integration and supporting immigrants in becoming U.S. citizens. Heightened enforcement has impacted Southeast Asian Americans and other long-time residents and refugees. Since 2015, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has arrested nearly 15,000 immigrants from Asia. As of June 2018, nearly 5,000 Asian immigrants, including asylum seekers, were in detention. From 2017 to 2018, the Cambodian American refugee community suffered a 279% increase in deportations.

Overall, passage of the Dignity Not Detention Act would make the State of Maryland a safer place to live for citizens and non-citizens of all races, as well as greatly reduce the number of AAPI immigrants who are forced through the often dehumanizing and discriminatory ICE detention system.

The AAPI Caucus urges a favorable vote on HB16.