

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We are also working in collaboration with the CASA de Maryland. I am a resident of MD District **11**. I am testifying **in support of House Bill 16, the Dignity Not Detention Act.**



ICE has a long-documented history of unsafe housing conditions, including insufficient medical care. In 2020, some of the worst COVID-19 outbreaks occurred in immigration detention centers, including nearly 90% of detainees infected in Farmville, Virginia. ICE detainees are more than 13 times likely to contract COVID-19 as the general public.

In addition, private, for-profit prisons are motivated by cutting costs — like medical staffing and other contracted staffing. They are also financially motivated to increase the number of detainees. In a system where people equals profit, cost-cutting and overcrowding lead to poor conditions for detainees, many which have no criminal background and are being held to await a civil immigration trial.

Counties like Howard, Frederick, and Worcester bring in hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars from renting their bed space to ICE. This further incentivizes detention. Our government should not be profiting off the unjust treatment of Maryland residents.

This bill will stop ICE from detaining immigrants in Maryland, and ensure that local governments do not profit off the detention of immigrants. This is an important step in ending mass incarceration and dismantling the private prison industry in Maryland.

Maryland must not be complicity in the separation of families, the forced expulsion of people from their homes, and the dissolution of communities. A government that profits off of misery has every reason to reinforce that misery.

It is for all these reasons that I urge you to vote in **support of the Dignity Not Detention Act (House Bill 16)**. Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ben Fertig

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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore