

My name is Abigail Leibowitz and I am a senior at Northwood High School in Silver Spring, MD. I urge my legislatures to support HB 0016, the Dignity Not Detention Act.

Seeking asylum is not a crime- it is in US and international law that everyone has this right. Why, then, are immigrants criminalized and put in detention centers owned by jails that are meant to deal with criminals? Why are faultless individuals profited off of?

Private detention centers have time and again proven to evade responsibility and accountability. ICE has terrorized communities across the nation, stripping families apart and leaving families vulnerable. Maryland should play no part in the terrible ICE presence in this country and in the misery of hundreds.

I live in Montgomery County, a county that has 4 of the most diverse cities in the nation. Diversity and inclusion are a hallmark of this state, and we must not let ICE change that. We should make our community members feel welcome, regardless of their immigration status, without the fear of being separated from their families and detained simply for seeking a better life for their children. No one deserves losing their humanity to be made a profit off. Families belong together and children do not belong in cages.

I implore my legislators to support this bill because I believe in the dignity and humanity of my community members and in welcoming the vulnerable.