



**HB 639 - Transportation - Aviation - Passenger Health and Safety
(Aviation Health and Safety Act)
Hearing before the House of Delegates Environmental and
Transportation Committee,
Feb. 19, 2026**

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the House Environment & Transportation Committee,

As I know this body recognizes, we are at a moment in history when it is incumbent upon us as legislators to do everything in our power to fight back against the devastating harms ICE and this Federal administration are wreaking upon our community members. The Aviation Health and Safety Act, HB 639, is potentially one of the most impactful tools you have at your disposal, and I urge you to give it a favorable report.

The FAA has authority over many – *but not all* – aspects of the detention flights passing regularly through Maryland airports. Maryland has authority over the airport-based companies that provide aviation services such as fueling, and so this body has the opportunity and the responsibility to address the egregious violations of human rights occurring on our tarmacs.

Flight attendants have been vocal about the impossibility of meeting FAA standards on evacuation times with passengers who are shackled for the purpose of restraining their movements.¹ **Flight attendants have reported being told to simply leave detainees on board in case of emergency.² And the risk of fires and explosions is especially high during fueling.**

The Aviation Health and Safety Act will ban the fueling of flights with individuals in any kind of restraint on board. When individuals in restraints are removed so the airplane

¹ [14 CFR § 25.803 - Emergency evacuation. | Electronic Code of Federal Regulations \(e-CFR\) | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute](#)

² [Inside ICE Air: What It's Like to Be a Deportation Flight Attendant — ProPublica](#)

can be fueled, they must be in a climate-controlled enclosure and must have access to restrooms and water.

There are regular reports of detainees being denied critical medical care, both in detention facilities and once on flights. You can do something about this. HB 639 requires that flight crews distribute and collect medical forms from all detained passengers to be provided to emergency responders or hospitals in case of a medical emergency, with compliance noted by the aviation service company prior to services like fueling.

The bill also requires documentation of minors on board and their guardianship information if parents are not also on board – necessary information in the state of Maryland should there be a medical emergency that requires care for this minor.

While HB 639 will directly address serious health and safety issues, it will also have the side effect of slowing down deportation flights and simply tracking where detainees are taken, an impact that will be multiplied if other states follow suit. These flights are stacked with residents being rushed out of the country, often for the very purpose of denying them access to legal support and due process.

For example, a few months ago, I received a call about a high school student who had been detained by ICE a few days prior, after being a passenger in a vehicle that was stopped by Feds. She had suddenly stopped showing up in the ICE locator search, and her parents were, of course, panicked. As we spoke, they received a call from her: She was in another country. **She had been deported, without being able to notify her parents, without time for their lawyer to take action, without the ability for her family to plan for her safety upon arrival in another country.**

Another Montgomery County resident, a father originally from Mexico, was dropped in Guatemala with no prior notice to him or his family — without his ID, phone, or money.

To be clear: **With this bill, you have an opportunity to ensure that Maryland knows who is on deportation flights, including if there are detained minors without their parents — who may be desperately looking for them.** It is a moral imperative that we take this opportunity.

No other legislation before the legislature this year addresses these issues.

Our residents, our values, and all of our rights are under attack. HB 639 is brilliant. It is necessary. And it will mark the start of other states taking what control they can through

their airports as well. Please take this opportunity to lead by ensuring its quick passage out of Committee with a favorable report.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KM', is positioned below the 'Thank you.' text.

Kristin Mink,
Councilmember
Montgomery County, Maryland
District 5