

FAVORABLE WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON SB0984 Submitted by Lorette Vetusi – Correctional Services - Private Detention Facilities - Zoning Requirement 3/31/26

I am a resident of Harford County, and I am submitting written testimony in favor of SB0984 - Correctional Services – Private Detention Facilities – Zoning Requirement. SB0984 prohibits state and local government agencies from approving the use of a building or a property as a detention center when it would be owned and operated by a private entity. This bill also establishes penalties for noncompliance and allows the Attorney General to bring civil action to enforce the law.

I am greatly in favor of the passage of this bill, and I am glad to see that it has been designated as an “emergency bill” which would go into effect immediately after being signed by the governor. I consider this bill to be one of the most important pieces of legislation during the current session. Maryland absolutely needs to legally halt the construction and operation of privately run detention centers in our state!

Instead of being focused on public welfare and safety concerns, private detention centers will undoubtedly be focused on maximizing their profits. Maximizing profits means maximizing the number of detainees they are holding at any given point in time and/or maximizing their length of stay in a facility. Overcrowded conditions in detention centers obviously increase concerns about adequate sanitation and ventilation, physical and sexual abuse, medical neglect and the spread of contagious diseases, adequate supplies of food, clean water, and hygiene products, lack of access to legal counsel and materials, and violations of due process and civil rights.

Additionally, ICE/CBP officials have been restricting the ability of members of Congress to visit and inspect immigration detention facilities thereby preventing adequate oversight, accountability, and transparency at a time when they are desperately needed. Reports indicate that 32 people died in ICE detention centers last year, and 14 people have died in ICE custody so far in 2026. This is a totally unacceptable and tragic outcome, although not surprising given the inhumane conditions that have been documented inside these camps.

This bill reinforces the authority of state and local government agencies to regulate land use. It would also protect residents of local Maryland communities where detention centers have been proposed from experiencing potential infrastructure-related concerns such as water supply, waste management, traffic, security, and the capacity of local emergency services.

During this horrific time in our country’s history when the federal government has implemented a mass deportation program which relies upon racial profiling to round up large numbers of immigrants to be arrested, detained, and incarcerated, Maryland needs to do everything in its

power to protect our vulnerable immigrant population who contribute much more to our state's economy than they take away.

For these reasons, I urge your Committee to move SB0984 forward with a favorable vote. Thank you so much for your consideration and for working on behalf of all Marylanders!

Lorette Vetusi  
2900 Sedgefield Court  
Fallston, MD 21047