

Dear Delegate Wells,

I am writing in favor of the proposed bill HB1017 to prohibit the State or a unit of local government from approving the use of a building or structure as an immigration detention facility by a private entity unless certain zoning authority applies; establishing a certain penalty for a certain violation; and authorizing the Attorney General to bring a civil action to enforce the Act. This is very important to me as a community member living near the proposed site for the federal ICE facility in Hagerstown, MD. As elected representatives, all politicians are expected to uphold the values of human rights, due process, and the U.S. Constitution. This includes enforcing rules and guidelines that support basic human dignity and to question whether large facilities like this can realistically meet humane standards of care for thousands of people without an impact on the surrounding region.

Recent reports and videos from the ICE Baltimore Field Office show "short-term" holding rooms being used for days. Detainees have been denied basic hygiene, timely medical care, and access to legal counsel. Recent reports of deaths and medical neglect in detention facilities raise serious concerns about the ability of ICE to detain people within the limits of the law and basic human decency. I'm also deeply concerned about the impact detention has on families, particularly children, within the boundaries of our county.

In addition to the severe ethical concerns this type of facility presents for our community, there are other more practical concerns that putting people in warehouses will create. Our county has lost 1.3 million dollars in local and state taxes from the private sale of this warehouse to DHS. Also, converting a warehouse into a detainment facility creates an additional burden on our community's resources such as water, sewer, and the demand on our local emergency, fire, EMT, and police as they will be the first responders to 1,500+ detainees and staff. This drains resources from our neighbors without federal reimbursement and creates a potential crisis for residents of our county.

Nationally, discretionary releases of detainees have plummeted by nearly 90%. People are being held indefinitely without bond, even those with no criminal records. The UN has recently (Jan 2026) decried the "dehumanization" and "routine abuse" of migrants in U.S. interior detention. As an educator and an active member of my community who cares about the long-term health of our region, I'm concerned that this facility could have long-term consequences for businesses and the infrastructure of our area and other areas in our state. I would strongly encourage you to request a tour of a similar facility, if you have not, to see with your own eyes what is in store for the people of our region if DHS is allowed to proceed with their plans for this facility.

The DHS proposal reflects a broader pattern of federal decisions shifting long-term operational, infrastructure, and emergency costs onto local governments without corresponding authority or compensation. Decisions of this magnitude affect public confidence in county and state leadership, particularly when made without transparency

or public consent.

We are watching your actions closely. Please be advised that your leadership, or lack thereof, on this issue will be a primary factor for many of us at the ballot box this year. Our community is committed to supporting candidates who prioritize human rights and local fiscal responsibility over power-hungry federal interests. We expect our leaders to protect the character and values of our district by passing bills that prohibit atrocities like this from happening in Maryland.

With great concern,

Ginny Ritchie
Hagerstown, MD