

Dear **Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections 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, Baltimore County, and Howard County. I am a resident of **District 46**. I am a dedicated resident and community leader in Baltimore City's southeast: a community association board member, workforce development professional, and industrial and organizational practitioner. I live in and love the vibrant immigrant hub of Baltimore City, the engine of Baltimore's growth, near Highlandtown in District 46. I have been advocating and protesting for my immigrant neighbors and their human rights since 2016 when the lawless assault against them began in earnest with the illegal travel ban. **I am testifying in support of HB1017 to add zoning requirements for private immigration detention facilities.**

The bill HB1017 would prevent the operation of any immigration detention facilities unless the applicable zoning regulations explicitly allow these facilities.

All human beings have fundamental rights and dignities that must be respected. Unfortunately, in detention facilities run by private companies, the requirement to respect the rights of the incarcerated is in direct conflict with the profit motives of those running these facilities. This is especially likely to be true when private companies are allowed to convert warehouses or other buildings not intended to house human beings into detention centers. In 2025, conditions in immigration detention facilities declined, with "worsening and substandard medical care, growing complaints of abusive conditions, and documented extensive violations of detention standards."¹ These problems are expected to continue in 2026 as increasing demand for detention space continues to outstrip supply. Zoning regulations can help prevent these abuses from being perpetuated in Maryland.

Although Maryland has not experienced the same level of concentrated ICE action that we have recently seen in Minneapolis, recent moves by ICE to purchase and convert warehouses into detention facilities raise concerns that such a "surge" may be planned for Maryland.² Our state has a duty to safeguard our immigrant neighbors, and that must include making all possible efforts to prevent the establishment of new detention centers to fuel the ongoing terror campaign. Allowing the construction of such facilities in communities, alongside the schools, parks, and houses where people are trying to live their lives, furthers this fear and makes it even more constant.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in support of HB1017.

Sincerely,

John Preston Ford

529 S East Ave, Baltimore, MD 21224

¹ Reichlin, Aaron. "New Report Details ICE's Expanding and Increasingly Unaccountable Detention System." American Immigration Council, 23 January 2026, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/ice-expanding-detention-system/>. Accessed 9 February 2026.

² Conarck, Ben, Zawodny, Daniel and Bologna, Giacomo. "Feds purchase warehouse near Hagerstown, fueling talk of immigration detention center." The Baltimore Banner, 27 January 2026, https://www.thebanner.com/politics-power/national-politics/federal-government-buys-hagerstown-warehouse-immigration-detention-VAHWF3IP5BGJPOLUTFKSKLWFBQ/?utm_content=bc_mr. Accessed 10 February 2026.