

HB1017 - SUPPORT
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HB 1017 – Correctional Services - Private Immigration Detention Facilities - Zoning Requirement

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
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Chair Wells and Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee: my name is William Mascioli. I have lived in Silver Spring, Maryland, for more than 40 years. I am among a group of neighbors who last year formed North Woodside Civil Resistance out of concern for the threat to our democracy posed by the actions of the Trump administration. I am writing to strongly support HB1017, prohibiting private entities from using a building or structure as an immigration detention facility absent extremely specific zoning authority.

We are a state of immigrants in a nation of immigrants. Our immigrant neighbors work, attend school, pay taxes, and contribute to their communities just like the rest of us. Immigrants enliven our communities, and contribute far more to our economy by paying far more in taxes than they receive in benefits, a fact recently documented by the Cato Institute (between 1994 and 2023, immigrants reduced deficits *every year* for a cumulative reduction of \$14.5 trillion)/

Sure, the country needs to control its borders and maintain an orderly and equitable immigration process. But what the administration in Washington has put in place is something so shocking that it defies belief: masked thugs terrorizing our community, violently detaining our neighbors, and disappearing them into a system with no transparency or accountability.

Which brings us to the administration's immigration detention camps.

We know conditions in these facilities are terrible — so bad that ICE routinely and illegally denies lawmakers access for inspection. Reports have emerged of physical and sexual abuse, extreme overcrowding, inadequate and sometimes spoiled food, a hazardous lack of hygiene, and extremely limited access to medical care or counsel. Advocates for immigrants had to obtain a temporary restraining order at one facility to get the administration to provide cots, rather than leaving detained immigrants sleeping on the floor or plastic chairs. As of this writing, dozens have died under these conditions since Trump took office.

The Trump administration apparently plans to indefinitely detain tens of thousands of immigrants, many picked up solely because of the color of their skin, the language they speak, or the places they work. These are for the most part people innocent of any threat to the public.

CBS News has recently reported on a *DHS internal memo* revealing that only 14% of those arrested by ICE during the last year had violent records; the “internal data indicate that less than 2% of those arrested by ICE over the past year had homicide or sexual assault charges or convictions. Another 2% of those taken into ICE custody were accused of being gang members.” Indeed, of the more than 3,300 people picked up by ICE in our state last year, the vast majority had no criminal convictions; more than half had never been charged. This is an outrage; Maryland should have no part in it.

This massive and indiscriminate detention policy is shattering families and destabilizing communities right here in Maryland. People are afraid to go to work, to take their children to school, or to shop for basic necessities. Civic-minded Maryland voters are stepping up in this emergency: collecting and delivering food & toiletries and escorting children to school – assistance that was never needed before.

Marylanders are publicly standing up for the values enshrined in our law and the U.S. Constitution. HB 1017 would be an important step in defense of those same basic values. Thank you for your consideration.