

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1017 - Correctional Services - Private Immigration Detention Facilities - Zoning Requirement

TO: Chair Melissa Wells and Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

FROM: Jennifer Hess

DATE: February 10, 2026

Chair Wells and Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee, my name is Jennifer Hess and I live in Silver Spring, Maryland. I am writing to urge you to support HB1017 Prohibiting 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.

More than one in six Maryland residents are immigrants. Many have lived here for decades, work in the community, pay taxes, and contribute to our state in multiple ways. Maryland values its residents of all backgrounds, cultures, and experiences.

In 2025, Federal ICE agents arrested more than 3,300 people in Maryland, more than twice the number arrested in 2024. Only one-third of those arrested had any criminal convictions, and just over half had no criminal charges whatsoever. If we allow ICE to build detention centers in Maryland, more innocent people will be arrested, and our great state will be culpable in allowing them to be held in horrendous conditions here.

Private detention centers create fear and distrust in our community, making people afraid to go to work, take their children to school, and shop for food and other necessities. The proposed detention facilities should not be next to schools, parks, medical offices, and residential neighborhoods.

ICE agents have repeatedly ignored the rule of law and the civil rights guaranteed to all US residents in the Constitution, including undocumented immigrants. Maryland needs to stand up to these abuses. Supporting HB1017 is one step in this process.