



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

April 2nd, 2026

SB984

**Correctional Services - Private Immigration Detention Facilities - Zoning Requirement
Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **Senate Bill 984**. **The Maryland** Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 984 prohibits the State or local governments from approving the use of any building or structure as an immigration detention facility unless it is consistent with local zoning authority. It also establishes penalties for violations and allows the Attorney General to take civil action to enforce the law.

This policy is a proactive safeguard to ensure that communities are not blindsided by the sudden placement or conversion of facilities into private detention centers without local oversight. Clear zoning standards protect residents, support proper land-use planning, and ensure that any future proposals undergo a transparent and accountable review process. These protections help prevent unsafe or unsuitable buildings from being used to detain vulnerable individuals.

This legislation reinforces our call to uphold the dignity of every person, especially migrants and families seeking safety. Ensuring that detention facilities cannot be quietly opened or expanded without community input protects both the people inside these facilities and the neighborhoods around them. It reflects the principles of subsidiarity, responsible stewardship, and the common good.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **Senate Bill 984**.