

Testimony Supporting SB0984
Correctional Services - Private Detention Facilities - Zoning Requirement

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

March 31, 2026

The Honorable Chair, Delegate Melissa Wells, Vice Chair Delegate Kenneth Kerr, and esteemed members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee:

I am writing to ask you to vote in support of Senate Bill 984 (SB0984). This bill would prohibit the state and local governmental units from approving the construction or operation of a detention facility by a private entity, and bars a private entity from operating or occupying a building as a detention facility. The bill authorizes the Attorney General to bring civil actions against private entities to enforce violations.

Preventing immigrant detention operations from being conducted in buildings that are privately owned and outside of governmental oversight would help promote the health and safety of immigrants and other individuals detained in the course of immigration enforcement proceedings.

For over a year, immigrants and watchdog groups [have reported poor conditions within detainment facilities](#), including medical mistreatment and neglect, inadequate nutrition, unsanitary conditions, and overcrowding. Detainees are reportedly being held at these facilities [longer than they should be, and without adequate oversight](#). Fueled by over \$45 million in funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention as part of the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” immigration experts say the ICE detention system has [“grown larger, more abusive, and more opaque than ever as the Trump administration rushes to detain ever-greater numbers of immigrants as part of its mass deportation push.”](#) The rush to acquire and develop detention facilities nationwide has created financial incentives for private entities such as warehouse owners to sell properties to the government for profit. We have already seen this occurring in [Maryland](#).

Maryland should not have private detention centers. Our state should not be involved in the clear human rights abuses being perpetuated in private detention centers under the guise of immigration enforcement. For these reasons, I urge your favorable report on SB0984 as amended.

Respectfully Submitted,
Melinda Littell
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