

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable
HB 1017 – Correctional Services – Private Immigration Detention Facilities – Zoning 3 Requirement
Government, Labor, and Elections Committee Hearing
February 12, 2026

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, Delegate Stewart, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to urge you to issue a **favorable report on HB 1017**.

Washington County is currently allowing ICE to convert a warehouse into an immigration detention facility in an area that is not zoned or permitted for such a structure. This bill would seek to address this grievous error by

- Prohibiting state or local governments from approving the use of a building or structure as an immigration detention by a private entity unless certain zoning authority applies.
- Including a retroactive clause and civil penalty of up to \$10,000/day.
- Authorizing the Attorney General to bring civil action for enforcement.

These safeguards are critical guardrails for human rights. The federal government has deliberately allowed conditions in immigration detention facilities to become inhumane and degrading. This is not accidental—it is a strategy meant to pressure people into self-deportation by making detention unbearable.

This issue is very personal to me because my late father in law was wrongfully held in a re-education, prisoner of war camp for his political and religious beliefs in Vietnam. He then sought asylum in America for those very pro-democracy beliefs and Catholic faith. Considering the civil rights and freedoms which our Constitution grants to all *persons*, I feel very strongly that we should not have roving patrols kidnapping and secreting community members, disregarding their Constitutional Rights and due process, and concentrating them into camps on the basis of racial profiling, languages spoken, or quotas issued.

Maryland must not be complicit in this approach. Before a detention facility is allowed to operate in our communities, we must require strong safeguards that protect human dignity, public resources, and the values of this state. HB 1017 is a responsible and necessary step in that direction.

I also want to be clear that I do not believe individuals who are not violent criminals should be detained at all. The enormous amount of money being spent on immigration detention does nothing to improve public safety and diverts resources away from what Marylanders actually need. This issue is not about crime—it is about immigration policy and human rights.

Vote **favorable on HB 1017** and allow this bill to move forward to the full House for consideration. Thank you for your time and for your service.

Sincerely,

Jean Montgomery

Olney, MD