

Testimony on SB0985: Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Minimum Mandatory Standards

Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 10, 2026

Position: Favorable

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kendra Westervelt and I am a resident of Clarksburg, MD. I strongly urge the committee to pass SB0985.

This bill seeks to codify common-sense guardrails on the operation of detention centers and correctional facilities. Given reports of [human rights abuses](#) and [disease outbreaks](#) at the Fallon Center in Baltimore, where a hundred or more immigrants are crammed into tight spaces with no access to clean water or sanitary facilities, there is a clear need for laws that enforce basic health and safety standards on the operation of these facilities.

The companies that operate these facilities have a lot to gain by cutting corners on health and safety. [CoreCivic](#) and [Geo Group](#) will rake in \$1B in revenue from government contracts this year alone and their leaders consider the expansion of mass deportation in the United States “[one of the most exciting periods](#),” due to the windfalls they stand to receive. Their goal is to create these detention centers as quickly as possible. In the absence of humane and enforceable standards for health and safety, the result is [scarce regard for how the centers treat human beings being detained or incarcerated inside their facilities](#).

As a resident of Maryland, I think it is important to understand all the dangers and problems associated with these rushed purchases and makeshift facilities and to recognize that facilities that housed goods or services at one time are not set up to house humans. We say we are a civilized country, and we need to start acting like it.

Maryland has an obligation to implement laws that protect the health and safety of all human beings, including those who are detained or incarcerated. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0985.

Thank you,

Kendra Westervelt