



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

SB 0984 – CORRECTIONAL SERVICES – PRIVATE IMMIGRATION DETENTION FACILITIES – ZONING REQUIREMENT

POSITION: FAVORABLE

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters supports a criminal justice system that is humane and transparent at all stages, including detention.

A recently leaked [video of an ICE processing facility in Baltimore](#) demonstrates how inhumane these conditions can be – with people lying on filthy floors with emergency blankets, without access to bathrooms, and without sufficient food. Substandard nutrition and hydration, squalid conditions, overcrowding and inattention to medical care seem to be [typical of problems found in ICE detention centers](#) across the country.

Conditions are particularly egregious in [ICE facilities operated by private companies](#) that have received [unparalleled levels of funding](#) from the US Congress and have enjoyed a [guaranteed market](#) while being subjected to [little or no public scrutiny or oversight from the federal government](#). Because the federal government has shirked its responsibility in this arena, states are now compelled to act.

SB 0984 would prohibit 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 expressly permitted by applicable zoning laws. Moreover, private entities would be required to obtain appropriate use and occupancy authorization in order to operate or occupy a building or structure as an immigration detention facility. Those private entities that failed to do so would be liable for civil penalties. Given the inexcusably appalling conditions that detainees have experienced when confined to many privately managed facilities, the provisions of SB 0984 are warranted.

Therefore, **the League of Women Voters of Maryland**, representing nearly 2,000 citizens throughout Maryland, **strongly urges you to issue a FAVORABLE report.**