

Hearing March 12, 2026
Mary Jo Kirschman for BeTheChangeBmore
Baltimore, MD 21214

Testimony on SB0984
Position: Favorable
Private Immigration Detention Facilities

To: The Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Mary Jo Kirschman, D43, on behalf of BeTheChangeBmore

I am submitting this testimony in support of SB0984

BeTheChangeBmore is a Baltimore area advocacy organization with a network of over 1300 Marylanders. Since 2016 we have been working in partnership with organizations statewide to protect democracy and expand peoples' rights at the local, state and national levels.

We support SB0984 because Maryland laws now allow municipalities to approve new detention centers without meeting proper zoning or safety requirements. Right now, for example, the Washington County Council has approved the warehousing of people in *buildings constructed to handle commodities*.

Apparently, the Fallon Center Detention Center in Baltimore has, at least temporarily, closed down, after abusive conditions were well-documented. But now, detention camps are being located in rural areas where DHS expects less pushback from the community.

We see that plans to use a Washington County warehouse as a detention camp are moving ahead without transparency or public input, except for the vote of the County Council. This was approved without the careful consideration of the human or environmental impact that such a center will have on the town of Williamsport.

We know that DHS has a goal of establishing at least 92,000 detention beds around the country as quickly as possible, without regard to local laws and protections. We need to pass SB0984 now to strengthen our zoning laws and protect Maryland communities for the people who live here now. I have lived in this state for 73 years, and have been proud to call Maryland home. I hope that we will not allow unregulated prison camps for immigrants to be our legacy.

Please vote in favor of SB0984. Thank you for your consideration.

