

Testimony on SB0984: Correctional Services - Private Immigration Detention Facilities - Zoning Requirement

Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 10, 2026

Position: Favorable

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

My name is Kathy Shulman, and I am a resident of Baltimore, MD. I am also the co-lead of Indivisible Baltimore's Immigrant Rights Working Group.

Indivisible Baltimore is a unified coalition of diverse Baltimore residents who aim to connect, build, and support our community to uphold democracy, justice, and human dignity. We hold local, state and national leaders accountable, protecting the vulnerable, and strengthening democratic participation. Through empathy, education, and nonviolent resistance, we build bridges across political and social divides—because real change happens when we listen, learn, and act together. To date, we represent more than 2300 Baltimore City residents.

A pillar of Indivisible Baltimore's work is to support legislation that helps our state protect our immigrant neighbors and those immigrants across the country who are unjustly and illegally detained and deported by the Department of Homeland Security.

Indivisible Baltimore and I strongly urge the committee to pass SB0984.

This bill seeks to strengthen Maryland's stance on zoning requirements for correctional facilities and provides recourse for violations of state law. There are loopholes in current Maryland law allow municipalities to approve new detention centers without the proper zoning requirements. And these must be closed by state law.

As a result of the loopholes in our current state law, municipalities such as Washington County have [sanctioned](#) the use of warehouses constructed to handle commodities to detain human beings, without regard to whether there is [sufficient infrastructure to safely and humanely do so](#).

Given the [human rights abuses documented 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, and reports that DHS's plans to use a Washington County warehouse as a detention camp are [moving forward despite a lack of transparency and community input](#), there is a clear need to develop laws that will require municipalities to conduct greater oversight on immigration detention facilities in our state.

The warehouse in Williamsport is situated in an area of Washington County that is [not zoned for overnight habitation](#), creating a direct conflict between DHS and local laws. Despite this, Washington County officials say that they cannot require the federal government to follow local zoning laws.

Federal immigration officials are moving rapidly to expand their campaign of mass deportation and private sellers, such as the one that sold the Williamsport warehouse to DHS, have an interest in selling their operations as quickly as possible. But the way land is zoned for new detention centers in Maryland communities should be considered carefully and according to standards that protect human rights, safety, and the environment.

Maryland has an obligation to implement laws that protect the health and safety of all human beings, especially those who are detained or incarcerated. For the reasons stated in this testimony, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0984.

Thank you for your consideration of this essential piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Kathy Shulman,

Co-Lead, Immigration Rights Working Group, Indivisible Baltimore

Kathyshulman@proton.me

410-303-5037