

Dear **Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted in collaboration with Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. I am a resident and community association leader in **District 46, one of the most immigrant-dense communities in our state. The perceived safety of those immigrant communities is essential to the continued growth and vitality of the district, City, and State. I am testifying in support of SB0985 to institute minimum mandatory standards for private immigration detention facilities.**

The bill SB0985 would require Maryland to:

- establish mandatory minimum standards for conditions in immigration detention facilities;
- expand oversight and reporting authority to include inspections, public complaints, and staff reporting obligations;
- enforce compliance through annual facility certifications, with potential closure for life-threatening deficiencies.

All human beings have fundamental rights and dignities that must be respected. In Maryland, we have a system of minimum standards for correctional facilities, which are enforced by a commission that reports to the Governor and the General Assembly. Unfortunately, in detention facilities run by private companies, the requirement to respect the rights of the incarcerated is in direct conflict with the profit motives of those running these facilities. This is especially likely to be true when private companies are allowed to convert warehouses or other buildings not intended to house human beings into detention centers. In 2025, conditions in immigration detention facilities specifically declined, with “worsening and substandard medical care, growing complaints of abusive conditions, and documented extensive violations of detention standards.”<sup>1</sup> These declines are driven by the ongoing, mass arrests of immigrants by the federal government, and seem unlikely to resolve without outside pressure forcing facilities to comply with basic standards.

By introducing minimum standards for these facilities and increasing reporting requirements, state officials can help prevent these abuses. By also instituting penalties for failure to meet these requirements, state officials can compel compliance with the standards. SB0985 would improve conditions in private immigrant detention facilities by subjecting them to the same standards and scrutiny as our state-run correctional facilities.

**It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in support of SB0985.**

Sincerely,

**John Preston Ford**  
**529 S East Ave**  
**Baltimore, MD 21224**

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<sup>1</sup> Reichlin, Aaron. “New Report Details ICE’s Expanding and Increasingly Unaccountable Detention System.” American Immigration Council, 23 January 2026, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/ice-expanding-detention-system/>. Accessed 9 February 2026.