

Date of Hearing: March 12, 2026

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TESTIMONY ON SB#984 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
**Correctional Services–Private Immigration Detention Facilities–Zoning
Requirement**

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher , and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Lisa Anne Barkan

My name is Lisa Anne Barkan. I am a resident of District 42B. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#984 Correctional Services–Private Immigration Detention Facilities Zoning Requirement

The Trump Administration is engaged in a nationwide campaign to terrorize and demonize immigrants. Masked ICE Agents, who do not carry identification illegally pull immigrants out of their cars, forcibly enter their homes, and remove them from their families. Again, without any cause or due process of law, immigrants are then sent to Immigration Detention Centers. They are warehoused and subject to appalling conditions—lack of adequate sanitation, food, and medical care. Recently, a man who was being detained in an Immigration Detention Center in Arizona died because he had a toothache and was not provided with dental care. This is not an isolated incident.

In many states and local jurisdictions, ICE has entered and plans to enter into contracts with private companies to purchase and convert vacant warehouses into immigration detention facilities. State and local officials of both parties, as well as residents, often vehemently oppose ICE's plans.

According to the Baltimore Banner, ICE purchased a warehouse in Williamsport which it plans to convert into a 1500 bed detention facility. John Kurtz, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources; Serena McIlwain, Secretary of the Department of Environment; and Kathryn Thomson, Acting Secretary of the Department of Transportation sent a letter to the US Department of Homeland Security which details the Secretarys' concerns about the lack of infrastructure to support the project as well as the environmental impacts. The letter emphasizes that ICE failed to provide adequate time to evaluate these issues.

SB 984 addresses the Secretary's concerns. It would require the state and units of local government to expressly include Immigration Detention Facility within its applicable zoning authority. Accordingly, In order to operate such a facility, an entity would be subject to zoning laws and regulations that apply to immigration Detention Facilities. Importantly, it would not be able to operate such a facility until it obtained use and occupancy approval from the State or local government unit

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#984.