

Testimony on SB0984:

Correctional Services - Private Immigration Detention Facilities - Zoning Requirement

Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 10, 2026

Position: Favorable

My name is Lydia LaGue and I am a resident of Frederick, MD, 21701. I am President of Frederick AARP Chapter #636, a member of Indivisible Frederick Coalition, and on the Democracy team for Third Act Maryland.

I strongly support SB0984 because loopholes in current Maryland law allow municipalities to approve new detention centers without the proper zoning requirements. As a result, 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 appropriate infrastructure for the safe & sanitary and, especially, HUMANE accommodation of those detained.

There are too many past examples of DHS facilities being overcrowded with little to no access to clean water or sanitary facilities, let alone sufficient food and medical care. There is a clear need to develop laws to mandate 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.

DHS is moving swiftly to procure and establish more and more facilities such as the Williamsport warehouse, thus the zoning issue is imperatively time-sensitive. The Maryland Assembly needs to carefully consider and protect our standards and stand for the protection of human rights, safety, and the environment.

Many Marylanders take pride in the state being known for being humane and fair to its people. Please follow in support of this bill, to strengthen Maryland's position on zoning requirements for correctional facilities, to require repercussions for violations of state law, and to, above all, continue to protect the health and safety of **ALL** human beings in our state, including – always – those detained or incarcerated.

For the reasons stated in this testimony, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0984.

Thank you,

Lydia Goble LaGue

796-E Wembly Dr; Frederick, MD 21701