

**Testimony on SB0985: Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Minimum Mandatory Standards**

**Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**March 10, 2026**

**Position: Favorable**

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

My name is Laura Gillette and I am a resident of Columbia, MD. I strongly urge the committee to pass SB0985.

This bill seeks to codify common-sense guardrails on the operation of detention centers and correctional facilities. Given reports of [human rights abuses](#) and [disease outbreaks](#) 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, there is a clear need for laws that enforce basic health and safety standards on the operation of these facilities.

The companies that operate these facilities have a lot to gain by cutting corners on health and safety. [CoreCivic](#) and [Geo Group](#) will rake in \$1B in revenue from government contracts this year alone and their leaders consider the expansion of mass deportation in the United States “[one of the most exciting periods](#),” due to the financial windfalls they stand to receive. Their goal is to create these detention centers as quickly as possible. In the absence of humane and enforceable standards for health and safety, the result is [scarce regard for how the centers treat human beings being detained or incarcerated inside their facilities](#).

Detention camps in the U.S. are a violation of basic human rights, causing immense suffering for those who find themselves detained—often for seeking safety, freedom, or a better life. These facilities, which primarily house migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, are marked by overcrowding, inhumane conditions, and a complete disregard for the dignity of the individuals inside. Children are separated from their families, people endure physical and emotional trauma, and legal due process is often delayed or denied. The very existence of these camps reflects a system that prioritizes punitive measures over compassion, and deterrence over empathy. Maryland has an obligation to implement laws that protect the health and safety of all human beings, including those who are detained or incarcerated.

Instead of providing refuge to those fleeing violence and persecution, these camps become places of fear, hopelessness, and despair, reinforcing a dangerous narrative that dehumanizes immigrants and undermines the values of justice and fairness that the country claims to uphold. Detaining hard working immigrants while separating families does not solve any problem, it just manifests cruelty.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0985.

Thank you,

Laura Gillette

