

Testimony on SB985/Favorable
Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Minimum Mandatory Standards
Judicial Proceedings
Hearing Date: March 12, 2026

Recent immigration enforcement has expanded far beyond deporting individuals who have committed serious crimes. Increasingly, people are being detained regardless of citizenship status or criminal record. Conditions inside immigration detention facilities are often hidden from public view, where reports of neglect, abuse, and even deaths have raised serious concerns.

SB985 establishes basic safeguards to ensure that individuals held in immigration detention facilities in Maryland are treated humanely. The bill requires the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services to adopt enforceable regulations governing detention conditions, including standards for:

- Security and safety
- Food services
- Housing and sanitation
- Protection of individual rights
- Classification procedures and administrative recordkeeping

The bill also creates a transparent complaint process, allowing employees, detainees, visitors, and health professionals to file complaints anonymously online. Violations must be investigated and corrective action taken, including closure of facilities that pose life-threatening risks.

In addition, SB985 establishes inspection procedures for detention facilities. Interference with inspections can result in a facility being shut down, and privately operated centers may face financial penalties of up to \$10,000 per violation plus legal costs.

By establishing clear standards, accountability, and oversight, SB984 ensures that detention facilities operating in Maryland meet basic requirements for safety, health, and human dignity. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to give SB984 a favorable report.

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