

Testimony Supporting SB0985
Correctional Services - Private Immigration Detention Facilities –
Minimum Mandatory Standards

FAVORABLE

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Chair, Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, and esteemed members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing to ask you to vote in support of Senate Bill 985 (SB0985). I am strongly in favor of the State’s adoption of minimum mandatory standards applicable to the care, custody, and conditions of incarcerated individuals to apply to civil detainees in immigration detention facilities. I also support the measures intended to improve reporting of violations and security breaches, as well as implementing disciplinary measures to address them. It is important to adopt the enforcement tools to address noncompliance, such as auditing, reporting, and authorizing the Attorney General to bring actions when appropriate for specific violations. Critically, we must enact the provisions for ceasing operation of an immigration detention facility if it endangers the health or life of detainees.

During the past year, immigrants and watchdog groups have reported poor conditions within detainment facilities, including medical mistreatment and neglect, inadequate nutrition, unsanitary conditions, and overcrowding. Detainees are reportedly being held at these facilities longer than they should be, and without adequate oversight. Fueled by over \$45 million in funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention as part of the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” immigration experts say the ICE detention system has “grown larger, more abusive, and more opaque than ever as the Trump administration rushes to detain ever-greater numbers of immigrants as part of its mass deportation push.” The rush to acquire and develop detention facilities nationwide has created financial incentives for private entities such as warehouse owners to sell properties to the government for profit. We have already seen this occurring in Maryland.

It is more important than ever for Maryland to ensure it is doing all it can to promote the health and safety of incarcerated individuals or civil detainees. For these reasons, I urge your favorable report on SB0985.

Respectfully Submitted,
Melinda Littell
Arnold, D33C