



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony

SB 985 - Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Minimum Mandatory Standards Favorable Report

To: Sen. Will Smith, Chair, Sen. Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice-Chair, and
Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
From: Jim Caldiero, Lead Advocate Immigration,
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry-Maryland
Date: March 12, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in FAVOR of **SB 985, Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Minimum Mandatory Standards.**

I encourage your committee to deliver a favorable report on **SB 985**. As you may know, companion bill **HB 1018** passed its third reading overwhelmingly with a sufficient majority as an emergency bill.

The Department of Homeland Security, in particular its subordinate agency, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has a long, documented history of inhumane treatment, inadequate medical care, and unsafe conditions that have put the lives of detained immigrants at risk, many of whom have died as a result of their detention.

As our partners, Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice reported, “ICE detention centers can impose significant economic burdens on local communities while delivering minimal local benefits. Once ICE purchases a warehouse, it is removed from the local tax base. Moreover, high paying positions at detention centers require specialized certifications or security clearances, so contractors tend to import staff from outside the region; local hiring is often concentrated in low-wage, high-turnover roles. Local governments may be forced to upgrade infrastructure to accommodate high water usage, wastewater treatment, garbage disposal, and environmental monitoring. In addition, local communities often absorb the cost of road maintenance, emergency response, and fire protection. Finally, poor in-center health care leads to increased emergency room utilization in surrounding communities, leaving local hospitals to bear the burden.”

A recent congressional delegation to an ICE detention facility in Minnesota, Fort Snelling, for example, described the conditions as “akin to a third world prison.” U.S. Representative Kelly Morrison, a medical doctor, echoed the concerns of the detainees about the lack of healthcare and scarcity of blankets when the detainees were forced to sleep on the floor.

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We must ensure that these appalling conditions will not exist in Maryland. Urgent action is needed to protect the lives of immigrants in detention before it's too late. **SB 985** is one step toward ensuring humane treatment, ending mass incarceration and dismantling the private prison industry in Maryland.

My faith, which I share with more than 4000 Unitarian Universalists across the state, affirms that every human being has worth and should be treated with respect and dignity. The inhumane treatment of immigrant detainees is anathema to these values. Please ensure that no immigrant in Maryland will suffer the indignities described.

I encourage the committee to vote favorably on **SB 985**.

Thank you.

Sources:

Macias, Martin. "Immigrants at ICE's Adelanto detention center denounce lack of medical care and inhumane conditions," LA Times, 2/9/2026,
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<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/ice-detention-conditions-at-fort-snelling-labeled-inhumane/ar-AA1VwJRr?ocid=BingNewsSerp>

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