

Testimony Favorable to SB0934:

Correctional Services - Private Immigration Detention Facilities - Zoning Requirement

March 10, 2026

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

My name is Ezra Towne, and my pronouns are they/them. I am writing to you today because I am very concerned about the recent tactic of private entities (working with federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)) building new construction or repurposing already existing structures for detention facilities. **I support and ask for a favorable report with amendments.**

SB0934 approaches this problem by limiting zoning, or changes to zoning districts - making it nearly impossible to establish new detention structures in districts that do not already allow them.

The bil also expressly prohibits general government, public, or institutional uses from creating an immigration detainment facility, and describes the features of use and design that are designated as detention facilities.

In general, immigration detention facilities - whether privately or publicly owned - have inhumane conditions: overcrowding, lack of access to health care, and lack of access to legal representation. Immigration detention facilities near places of residence or other businesses intensify fear of being detained by people of color, who may not be immigrants or criminals.

The house cross-filed bill, HB1017, has already passed the floor of the house with some clarification amendments. I am proud of Maryland's creative strategies to limit the Trump administrations' proliferation of immigration detention facilities.

For these reasons, **I request a favorable report for SB0984 (Correctional Services - Private Immigration Detention Facilities - Zoning Requirement) with amendments that match the cross-filed house bill.**

Sincerely,

Ezra Towne

Wheaton, Maryland (District 18)