

Testimony on Senate Bill – Favorable
SB 984 – Correctional Services – Private Immigration Detention Facilities – Zoning Requirement
Judicial Proceedings Committee Hearing
March 12, 2026

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Wadstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to urge you to issue a **favorable report on SB 984**. Washington County is currently allowing ICE to convert a warehouse into an immigration detention facility in an area that is not zoned or permitted for such a structure. This bill would seek to address this grievous error by

- Prohibiting state or local governments from approving the use of a building or structure as an immigration detention by a private entity unless certain zoning authority applies.
- Including a retroactive clause and civil penalty of up to \$10,000/day.
- Authorizing the Attorney General to bring civil action for enforcement.

These safeguards are critical guardrails for human rights. The federal government has deliberately allowed conditions in immigration detention facilities to become inhumane and degrading. This is not accidental—it is a strategy meant to pressure people into self-deportation by making detention unbearable.

This issue is personal to me because a close loved wrong was wrongfully held in a prisoner of war, re-education camp. He then sought and was granted asylum in America for his pro-democracy beliefs and Catholic faith. Considering the civil rights and freedoms our Constitution grants to all *persons*, I feel strongly that we should not have roving patrols kidnapping community members, disregarding Constitutional Rights and due process, and concentrating them into camps on the basis of racial profiling, languages spoken, or quotas issued.

Maryland must not be complicit. Before a detention facility is allowed to operate in our communities, we must require strong safeguards to protect human dignity, public resources, and our state's values. **SB 984** is a responsible and necessary step in that direction.

I also want to be clear that I do not believe individuals who are not violent criminals should be detained at all. The enormous amount of money being spent on immigration detention does nothing to improve public safety and diverts resources away from what Marylanders actually need. This issue is not about crime—it is about immigration policy and human rights.

Vote **favorable on SB 984** and allow this bill to move forward to the full Senate for consideration. Thank you for your time and for your service.

Sincerely,

Jean Montgomery, District 14 voter.