

**Testimony on SB0984:** Correctional Services - Private Immigration Detention Facilities - Zoning Requirement

**Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**March 10, 2026**

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Christina M. Yuan, MD and I am a resident of Laurel, MD. I strongly urge the committee to pass SB0984.

I support SB0984 because loopholes in current Maryland law allow municipalities to approve new federal detention centers without proper zoning requirements. As a result, municipalities (e.g. Washington County) have approved retrofitting of warehouses built to handle commodities as detention/correctional facilities, without ensuring that there is sufficient infrastructure to safely and humanely do so.

Given their operations at the Fallon Center in Baltimore, where a hundred or more immigrants are crammed into tight spaces with no access to clean water, sanitary facilities, or healthcare, we cannot trust DHS to retrofit warehouses in compliance with health and safety requirements. Their plans in Washington county have been characterized by a lack of transparency and no solicitation of community input. Therefore, laws must be developed that will require municipalities to conduct greater oversight on immigration detention facilities in our state.

The warehouse in Williamsport is situated in an area of the county that is not zoned for overnight habitation, creating a direct conflict between DHS and local laws. Despite this, county officials say that they cannot require the federal government to follow local zoning laws.

Federal immigration officials are moving rapidly to expand their campaign of mass deportation and private sellers, such as the one that sold the Williamsport warehouse to DHS, have an interest in selling their buildings as quickly as possible. Zoning of the land where these new detention centers will be situated should be considered carefully and according to standards that protect local community resources, human rights, safety, and the environment.

This bill seeks to strengthen Maryland's stance on zoning requirements for correctional facilities and provides recourse for violations of state law. Maryland has an obligation to implement laws that protect the health and safety of all human beings, especially those who are detained or incarcerated. For the reasons stated in this testimony, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB0984.

Thank you,

**Christina M. Yuan**

**Laurel, MD**