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Testimony in support of Senate Bill 985

Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Minimum Mandatory Standards

To: Hon. William Smith, Jr., chair, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Jerry Kickenson, Treasurer and Montgomery County Coordinator, Congregation Action Network

Date: March 10, 2026

We are writing in **support of Senate Bill 985, Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Minimum Mandatory Standards**, on behalf of the Congregation Action Network (CAN). The Congregation Action Network is a network of faith communities in Washington, DC, and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs acting in solidarity to end detention, deportation, profiling, and criminalization of immigrants and demanding and upholding justice, dignity, safety, and family unity. With congregations and members throughout the capital area, including congregations with hundreds of members in Montgomery and Prince George's counties, we live our faith in advocacy for and solidarity with our immigrant neighbors.

We wish to thank Chairman Smith for sponsoring Senate Bill 985.

As people of faith committed to justice and compassion for immigrants, we adhere to the sacred texts of most major faiths that call for welcoming the stranger and treating each other with love, dignity, respect, and compassion. We believe in liberation and that immigrant families should be treated fairly and have the same protections as all Maryland residents.

SB985 will specify minimum standards for the care, custody, and conditions of civil detainees in immigration detention facilities. This is the least the state of Maryland can do, especially given the horrendous conditions reported in civil immigration detention facilities nationwide, including those reported in the Immigration and Customs Enforcement field office in Baltimore.

Immigrant communities in Maryland are scared, and with good reason. Our member congregations are either directly or indirectly impacted by the current civil immigration enforcement onslaught. While we believe that individuals charged with non-violent civil immigration offenses should not be detained at all, those that are must be treated with the care and dignity all of us deserve simply because we are human beings.

The Congregation Action Network respectfully urges you to reach a **favorable** report for SB985, that will simply impose minimum standards of care that all of us have the right to.

Respectfully yours,

Jerry Kickenson

Treasurer and Montgomery County Coordinator, Congregation Action Network

Silver Spring, MD