



Testimony on SB 985 - Favorable

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

Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 12, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, and Members of the Committee,

Doctors for Camp Closure Maryland chapter offers favorable testimony in support of SB-985 - Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Minimum Mandatory Standards.

Doctors for Camp Closure is a non-partisan organization of over 2,200 physicians and health care professionals from all specialties who oppose inhumane detention of migrants and refugees. We advocate for humane and just treatment for immigrants and are very opposed to ICE detention for our immigrant community.

At its core, this bill is about upholding Maryland's values—fairness, dignity, and justice for all. The Maryland Values Act affirms that our state should not be in the business of tearing families apart, undermining public trust, or funneling state and local resources into a federal deportation agenda. Instead, Maryland should stand firm in its commitment to community safety, due process, and equal treatment under the law - by prohibiting immigration detention in Maryland in every way possible.

We know as eyewitnesses, that there is no healthy amount of time for an immigrant to be detained. We have been inside of immigration detention centers and we know how hazardous these places are both to the immigrants and their families. We see how ICE detention has a negative impact on the health of our immigrant patients. Our mission is to promote good mental and physical health for our patients, while ICE detention has a damaging effect on their short and long-term health.

We are part of a national network where we write medical affidavits on behalf of detained immigrants. We review detention medical records and interview the detained immigrants. Many

times they receive medical care that is substandard and often are denied lifesaving medical care. And now ICE is no longer paying for medical care and deaths in detention are rising.

In the past week alone 2 more people have died in ICE custody. One from a condition that could have been treated so easily, a dental infection. ICE by their own admission is no longer paying for medical care. I just got someone released from ICE custody because he was near death due to the lack of medical care. The proposed warehouse in Hagerstown does not have nearly the water capacity needed to provide the detainees with adequate water for drinking and washing. But this corresponds to the eye witness account of detainees in ICE facilities who are denied access to clean drinking water and water for washing.

In addition, family members suffer when their parents and spouses are picked up by ICE and locked up out of reach from their family members. Families lose their wage earners and children lose their fathers. These children can no longer concentrate in school and suffer a host of psychological consequences.

Children in detention are severely suffering emotionally and physically and many will be affected for decades if not the rest of their lives. As we noted when we testified for the Dignity not Detention bill a few years ago, detention centers have no place in the state of Maryland. We are horrified that even with that bill having been enacted, we are now facing imminent threat of a detention center in Maryland.

As part of the Maryland Immigrant Justice Table, along with CASA, we strongly support a clean bill which will prohibit to the extent possible, any ICE detention centers in Maryland. This is what will bring Maryland closer to our values.

Doctors for Camp Closure Maryland urges the committee to provide a favorable report on SB 985.

Kate Sugarman, MD

Doctors for Camp Closure co leader

Potomac MD