

## **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 0984**

Correctional Services – Private Immigration Detention Facilities – Zoning Requirement

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee | March 12, 2026

To Chair Smith and the Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I write in strong support of SB0984, which would prohibit state and local governments from approving private immigration detention facilities unless proper zoning authority is satisfied — and hold violators accountable through civil enforcement by the Attorney General.

Zoning laws exist to ensure that land use decisions reflect the needs and values of the people who live there. Private immigration detention facilities are large, security-intensive operations that impose real impacts on surrounding neighborhoods — traffic, infrastructure demands, and public safety considerations. Requiring that standard zoning authority apply before such facilities can be approved simply ensures that affected communities are not bypassed in the process.

Privately operated detention facilities operate with profit incentives that can conflict with the health, safety, and dignity of those detained. By requiring local zoning approval, this bill creates a meaningful check on the rapid or opaque establishment of such facilities in Maryland.

The bill's provision authorizing the Attorney General to bring civil action gives the law teeth. Without enforcement mechanisms, zoning protections are easily circumvented. This provision ensures the State can act swiftly when violations occur.

With federal immigration enforcement activity at elevated levels, the prospect of new private detention infrastructure being stood up quickly — without community input or local oversight — is a real and present concern for Maryland residents.

SB0984 is a measured, targeted bill that upholds local democratic processes without obstructing any legitimate governmental function. I respectfully urge a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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