

March 9, 2026

Chair, House Judiciary Committee

Maryland House of Delegates

Testimony in Support of House Bill (HB0630) – Correctional Services Immigration Detention Facilities – Original Design and Construction

Dear Chair and Members of the Maryland House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the actions of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the implications for our communities in Maryland.

Overview of DHS Actions

Since the beginning of 2026, DHS has spent over **\$631.3 million** on warehouses across the U.S., repurposing them from storage for consumer goods to facilities intended for housing individuals. While **eight communities** have successfully resisted these changes, **nine warehouses** have been acquired, and another **nine** are still on the market. The facilities purchased can accommodate up to **41,500 individuals**, leading to costs exceeding **\$650 million annually** and impacting local property tax revenues by more than **\$3.1 million**. We now know that these purchases were also well above the appraised value, causing more alarm as to how our tax dollars are being used.

Local Impact

In **Washington County, Maryland**, DHS paid **\$102.4 million** for a warehouse in Williamsport that lacks essential utilities for human habitation. The community was not given the opportunity to voice their concerns during this process, and the sale proceeded without public notice. This oversight resulted in a loss of **\$300,000** in annual tax revenue in a county where **one in eight residents** live in poverty. Similarly, **Elkridge, Maryland**, narrowly avoided a comparable fate due to intervention from the county council.

Human Rights Concerns

Recent leaked footage from the **Fallon building in Baltimore** shows detainees packed shoulder-to-shoulder in rooms that are unfit for human use. Is this the standard of human rights we want the U.S. to represent? How can we allow such conditions to persist and even expand in Maryland and throughout our nation?

The Need for Legislative Action

The recent inclusion of the **GEO Group**, a private detention contractor, in the Department of Defense procurement contract further exacerbates these issues, allowing oversight and procurement processes to be bypassed. What happened in Washington County could happen elsewhere, and more swiftly, in total secrecy.

Maryland must respond. House Bill 630 provides a crucial opportunity to do so. It mandates that detention facilities be operated only in buildings specifically constructed for that purpose, ensuring they meet basic human habitation standards. This is a defense of fundamental human rights. OUR nation, OUR state must preserve and protect human rights.

Call to Action

Will we permit human beings to be stored in warehouses and freight areas, or will we insist on a higher standard that guarantees their basic rights within our state's borders?

I urge you to **pass House Bill 630** and affirm that Maryland will only allow detention facilities built with human dignity in mind, not repurposed from warehouses.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Pyles".

Dr. Jennifer Pyles
Middletown, Maryland