

Testimony on House Bill 630 – Favorable

HB 630 – Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Original Design and Construction March 9, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Karen Christof and I am a resident of Frederick, Maryland. I offer favorable testimony in support of HB 630 – Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Original Design and Construction.

Marylanders deserve to know what is being done in their name and with their tax dollars.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has spent \$631.3 million on nine warehouses across America since January of this year, one of which is located in Williamsport, MD. Originally built to store consumer goods, this structure & the others are now being converted to hold people. Eight communities have successfully refused them; Nine warehouses have been purchased. Nine more remain for sale. Collectively, the facilities already sold could detain 41,500 people, at an estimated cost of over \$650 million per year while draining over \$3.1 million from local property tax revenues.

Maryland failed to stop the purchase in Washington County — not for lack of will, but for lack of warning. DHS paid \$102.4 million for a Williamsport warehouse with no plumbing, electrical systems, or water infrastructure designed for human habitation. The sale was finalized without public notice. By the time the community learned of it, the transaction was complete. Washington County, where

one in eight residents lives in poverty, lost \$300,000 in annual tax revenue.

HB 630 requires that detention facilities operate only in buildings specifically constructed for the purpose of human habitation with the necessary water, electricity, and plumbing systems in place. Regardless of the federal agency or the procurement vehicle used, Maryland must maintain standards for what operates within its borders.

Along with the Dignity Not Detention Act, HB 630 ensures that any facility — federal or private — meets basic human habitation standards. It prevents Maryland from becoming a staging ground for “makeshift” prisons that fail the minimum standards of decency.

As a long time resident and taxpayer of Maryland, I expect nothing less. Do the right thing and pass HB 630.