

Testimony on HB0630: Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Original Design and Construction

Judiciary Committee

March 9, 2026

Position: Favorable

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

My name is Karen Whitham and I am a resident of Montgomery County, MD. I strongly urge the committee to pass HB0630.

I support HB0630 because it is necessary to close loopholes in current Maryland law that allow private companies to obtain approvals on detention centers without the proper zoning requirements. Buildings utilized to house goods are being bought to detain human beings with no regard for whether they have the correct infrastructure to safely and humanely do so. Given the [human rights abuses we are seeing at the Fallon Center](#) in Baltimore, where a hundred or more immigrants are crammed into tight spaces with no access to clean water or facilities, there is a clear need for to develop laws that will enforce basic health and safety standards on building operations.

Private sellers, like the one in Williamsport, MD, have an interest in selling their operations as quickly as possible. For health and safety reasons, facilities originally built to be utilized to house goods or services should not be repurposed into correctional facilities. This law aims to prohibit individuals from operating sites as correctional facilities when the original purpose of the site was not intended to be a correctional facility.

Maryland has an obligation to implement laws that protect the health and safety of all human beings, especially those who are detained or incarcerated. For the reasons stated in this testimony, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB0630.

Thank you,

Karen Whitham