

HB0630_ElizabethOrr_FAV
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Elizabeth D. Orr
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TESTIMONY ON HB0630 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Prohibiting the operation of an immigration detention facility at a building, structure, or facility that was not originally designed and constructed for the purpose of housing or detaining individuals

TO: Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Elizabeth D. Orr

My name is Elizabeth Orr and I am a resident of District 4. I am submitting this testimony in support of **HB0630, Prohibiting the operation of an immigration detention facility at a building, structure, or facility that was not originally designed and constructed for the purpose of housing or detaining individuals.**

I am greatly disturbed about the inhumane conditions that detainees (men, women and even children) are subjected to within detention centers across our country, and locally in Baltimore. Although few members of Congress or the press have gained access to these facilities, the reports are very disturbing. In 2019, The Atlantic magazine¹ reported on a doctor's visit to the Ursula Avenue Border Patrol warehouse in McAllen, TX. *"Inside the Border Patrol warehouse on Ursula Avenue, Dolly Lucio Sevier saw a baby who'd been fed from the same unwashed bottle for days; children showing signs of malnutrition and dehydration; and several kids who, in her medical opinion, were exhibiting clear evidence of psychological trauma."* On January 31 of this year, our own Representative April McClain Delaney reported the following when she, Senator Alsobrooks, and Senator Van Hollen finally were able to tour the Baltimore ICE Detention Facility *"In holding rooms that can contain up to 70 people, there is a single toilet and one shared phone. Detainees sleep on thin foam mats with no pillows and Mylar blankets. We did not see showers. People inside the cells were signaling to us that they were hungry and needed food."*

I am also very concerned about the lack of transparency around the Department of Homeland Security's acquisition of vacant warehouses; in particular, their purchase of a Williamsport, Maryland warehouse with no plumbing, electrical systems, or water infrastructure designed for human habitation. The sale was finalized without public notice; it appears the purchase even took the Washington County Board of County

¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/07/border-patrols-oversight-sick-migrant-children/593224/>

Commissioners by surprise. Washington County lost \$300,000 in annual tax revenue, money that no doubt provides much needed services to its low-income residents.

Regardless of what entity or federal agency is procuring property to be used for human habitation, Maryland must require and maintain standards for what operates within its borders. HB0630 ensures that any facility — federal or private — meets basic human habitation standards. It prevents Maryland from allowing detention centers or prisons that fail the minimum standards of decency. House Bill 630 gives Maryland the tools we lacked in Williamsport to safeguard our residents when the federal government acts without consultation. Without this bill, we have no recourse when the next warehouse is purchased through Department of Defense channels.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0630.