

HB0309 - SUPPORT
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HB 0309 – Judicial Facilities - Stops, Detentions, and Arrests - Limitations

Meeting of House Judiciary Committee
February 4, 2026

Dear Chair Bartlett & Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to urge a favorable report on HB0309, which would put limitations on stops, detentions, and arrests at judicial facilities.

I am shocked, dismayed, and filled with dread by the Trump administration's threats to our democracy, which have landed on many fronts, but at present appear most clear and most dangerous in its immigration practices. There are many things that alarm me—as they should any concerned citizen—about the Trump administration's immigration practices, such as the use of dragnet arrests based on racial, language, and employment profiling. Above all there is the brutality of the arrests, in which masked thugs viciously attack our immigrant neighbors, all while slandering them as violent criminals and “the worst of the worst.” Indeed, Federal agents seem deliberate in their use excessive force—pulling people from their vehicles through smashed car windows, throwing parents to the ground as their children look on in terror.

But perhaps most insidious is the practice of apprehending immigrants when they appear at courthouses. These are people doing their best to comply with the law and time and again they are rewarded with detention and deportation. This practice belies the idea that the administration's immigration policy is about public safety. Instead of seeking out the “worst of the worst,” ICE is going for the easy targets in service of satisfying Stephen Miller's quota fixation.

As New Jersey journalist Julie Roginsky wrote recently, “Criminals are hard to catch. They don't check in, provide an address to law enforcement, or show up for hearings. So instead, ICE goes after people who play by the rules to meet their deportation quotas.” It's lazy and cowardly in addition to being manifestly unjust. And it certainly doesn't make me feel safer.

The outrage of arresting people who are following the rules is compounded by the nightmare they face after their arrests. Once detained, migrants are shackled for long periods of time on buses and planes with no food, water, or functioning toilets. They are warehoused in often freezing holding cells with no access to hygiene or medical care. Finally, they are deposited in detention centers, where they face barbaric and dehumanizing conditions, including physical and sexual abuse, extreme overcrowding, inadequate and sometimes spoiled food, a hazardous lack of hygiene, and extremely limited access to medical care or counsel. As of this writing, dozens have died this year under these conditions.

I am aware that there are limits to our ability in Maryland to restrain the actions of the federal government, no matter how lawless. This makes it all the more imperative that Maryland act to disable wherever it can this oppressive machinery. Ruling judicial centers off-limits for ICE's predations seems a vital step in that pursuit. We can and must stand up for Maryland's values—and hope to thereby inspire other states to follow suit.