



## Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee

### HB 630 – Correctional Services – Detention Facilities – Original Design and Construction

March 11, 2026

#### FAVORABLE

YANET AMANUEL  
PUBLIC POLICY  
DIRECTOR

AMERICAN CIVIL  
LIBERTIES UNION  
OF MARYLAND

3600 CLIPPER MILL  
ROAD  
SUITE 350  
BALTIMORE, MD 21211  
T/410-889-8555  
F/410-366-7838

WWW.ACLU-MD.ORG

OFFICERS AND  
DIRECTORS  
Corey Stottlemyer  
PRESIDENT

DANA VICKERS  
SHELLEY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANDREW FREEMAN  
GENERAL COUNSEL

The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 630, which establishes clear limits on where and how detention facilities may operate in Maryland. The principles this bill advances are essential to all forms of detention: human dignity, public accountability, and the fundamental obligation of the State to ensure that people deprived of their liberty are housed in facilities designed for that purpose.

Across systems of detention, criminal, civil, and administrative, we have seen a dangerous trend toward expanding carceral capacity through expediency rather than care. The federal government is purporting to use warehouses, industrial buildings, and other structures never intended to confine human beings for detention.<sup>1</sup> With little to no public input from state and local governments or the communities, these modern-day concentration camps could become operational as early as April.<sup>2</sup> HB 630 draws a necessary and principled line: if the State or its partners are going to detain people, those facilities must be purpose-built, transparent, and subject to meaningful oversight.

Detention is one of the most severe exercises of government power. When the State confines someone, it assumes complete responsibility for that person's safety, medical care, and basic human needs. Facilities not designed for detention will inevitably fail to meet those obligations. Current improvised detention spaces like, Ft. Bliss-- a like tent camp on military bases, are associated with overcrowding, medical neglect, and multiple deaths.<sup>3</sup> These failures are not isolated accidents—they are the predictable result of placing human beings in hastily built cages with no regard for their humanity.

HB 630 also addresses a critical accountability gap by limiting the role of private, for-profit entities in detention. Across the detention landscape, privatization has created powerful financial incentives to cut corners, reduce staffing, and minimize medical and mental health care.<sup>4</sup> Private detention operators often function with little transparency, shielded from public records laws and routine oversight, even while exercising coercive power over people's lives. This lack of accountability undermines public trust and erodes

constitutional and human rights protections. profit entities in detention. Across the detention landscape, privatization has created powerful financial incentives to cut corners, reduce staffing, and minimize medical and mental health care.

Importantly, the bill reinforces the role of state and local governments in land use decisions affecting detention facilities. Requiring advance public notice and multiple opportunities for public comment recognizes that detention facilities fundamentally reshape communities. Maryland residents deserve to know when the federal government is setting up shop and operating a mass detention camp in their back yards and they deserve a meaningful opportunity to raise concerns about safety, potential strains on local resources like water, infrastructure, traffic, emergency services, and moral opposition to detention itself. -use decisions affecting detention facilities. Requiring advance public notice and multiple opportunities for public comment recognizes that detention facilities fundamentally reshape communities. Maryland residents deserve to know when the federal government is setting up shop and operating a mass detention camp in their back yards and they deserve a meaningful opportunity to raise concerns about safety, potential strains on local resources like water, infrastructure, traffic, emergency services, and moral opposition to detention itself.

Concerns about federal preemption should not deter this General Assembly from acting. States have long exercised their police powers to regulate health, safety, land use, and the operation of detention facilities within their borders. Where cooperation with federal authorities exists, it has historically been conditioned on compliance with state law, not exemption from it.

HB 630 challenges us to confront a deeper question that cuts across all systems of detention: how comfortable are we in allowing human confinement to expand in the shadows, driven by cruelty, convenience and profit rather than necessity and care? People in detention—whether accused, convicted, or held under civil authority—remain human beings. They do not lose their right to safety, dignity, or basic decency at the moment a door locks behind them. By insisting that detention occur only in facilities designed for that purpose, subject to public scrutiny and democratic control, HB 630 represents a modest but vital step toward a more humane and accountable system.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Maryland respectfully urges the Committee for a favorable report on HB 630.