

Testimony on House Bill – Favorable
HB0630
Correction Services – Immigration Detention Facilities – Original Design and Construction
Judiciary Committee

March 11, 2026

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

My name is Anne Lafferty, and I am a resident of Silver Spring in Montgomery County, MD. I am writing in support of HB0630, Correction Services – Immigration Detention Facilities – Original Design and Construction.

The agency responsible for immigrant detention is ICE. That agency has been buying up warehouses across the country, in order to turn those structures into immigrant detention centers.

Clearly, facilities that have been warehousing inanimate objects need significant renovation before they are used to house large numbers of people, assuming that they can be appropriately and successfully modified for their new purpose at all. ICE seems at times be unclear on the extent of the necessary renovations and the procedures it needs to observe before it starts work on them. A case in point is the proposed facility in Hagerstown, for which ICE has largely failed to provide the necessary paperwork and undergo the necessary reviews. One piece of paperwork it did file, an “Early Notice and Public Review of a Proposed Activity in a 100- to 500-Year Floodplain” seems to be unrealistically optimistic about the changes necessary to the sewers to accommodate 1,500 detainees and facility staff, instead of just a few warehouse employees. The document does not even mention changes necessary to supply the repurposed facility with the vastly greater amount of water it will need, so we do not know if they have considered this issue.

In general, it is better to house people in facilities intended from the beginning for the purpose of housing people. When the agency that will be running a facility seems unable or unwilling to publicly and accurately evaluate the necessary changes to buildings originally built for other purposes and commit itself to those changes, it is imperative that the building it uses be suitable for the purpose already.