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## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 630

### Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Original Design and Construction

#### *Judiciary Committee*

March 11, 2026

**Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports HB 630**, which would prohibit facilities not originally designed for the purpose of housing or detaining people from being used as detention centers. The dignity of every person and the responsibility to safeguard our most vulnerable neighbors are among the core principles of social work and social justice. We are deeply disturbed by the Federal government's violent assault on our communities and immigrant neighbors, which violate both our core values as social workers and basic human decency. **HB 630 would demonstrate that Maryland will not be an accomplice to a regime of cruelty - ensuring that no person in will be detained in Maryland in a facility that was never designed for human habitation, safety or basic care.**

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other federal agencies are pushing an aggressive mass deportation agenda that threatens the safety and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities in Maryland and across the country. ICE arrests in Maryland nearly tripled between 2024 and 2025, with 3,308 arrests occurring between January 1, 2025, and October 15, 2025 - compared to 1,353 arrests in 2024.<sup>1</sup> As it continues to increase arrests, the federal government is scrambling to acquire new buildings to facilitate its violent mass detention and deportation operation.

**HB 630 would help prevent the predictable harm caused by slapdash use of facilities not designed for human habitation.** In January 2026, the Department of Homeland Security purchased a warehouse in Washington County for use as a detention facility to support the sharp escalation in federal actions targeting immigrant communities in Maryland and across the country.<sup>2</sup> The use of warehouses and office buildings as detention facilities - sites not originally intended for detention use and often lacking essential infrastructure needed to house people safely and humanely - further reveals the Federal Administration's disregard for the life and dignity of those impacted by its aggressive immigration enforcement tactics.

**As a nation, we have seen the consequences of housing human beings in spaces not designed or equipped for detention.** 2025 was the deadliest year for those in ICE custody in 20 years; 32 individuals died in ICE custody - with their deaths linked to overcrowding, unsanitary living conditions, and inadequate medical care - while in detention facilities.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, these deaths were not isolated instances but reveal a pattern of predictable and preventable harm. Housing detainees in warehouses, tents, office buildings or any other unmonitored congregate setting presents severe risks and will cause further harm, to which Maryland should not be an accomplice.

**Maryland should not allow the existence and expansion of conditions and facilities that are fundamentally dehumanizing.** Internal whistleblowers, members of Maryland's Congressional delegation, and individuals released from ICE detention facilities have all described deplorable conditions, including having medical care withheld, unsanitary bathroom situations, lack of adequate bedding, inadequate temperature control, and extreme overcrowding.<sup>4</sup> This creates an unsafe environment where people are more susceptible to disease and sickness and prevents staff from appropriately monitoring detainees to ensure their safety.

**As social workers, we recognize these conditions as forms of racialized, institutional violence that violate both human and Constitutional rights principles and exacerbate trauma, especially among refugees, asylum seekers, and individuals fleeing violence.** Detention in repurposed buildings, not designed for residential care, medical safety, or humane living, heightens the risk of psychological distress, physical injury, and preventable death. It denies detainees basic human rights and violates their Constitutional rights. Immigration detainees are held under civil, not criminal law. Under *Bell v. Wolfish* (1979),<sup>5</sup> civil detainees, including individuals held in immigration custody, may not be subjected to punitive conditions. Courts have held that conditions that are equivalent to or more restrictive than criminal detention may be presumed unconstitutional.<sup>6</sup> Federal ICE detention standards further require facilities to meet safety, sanitation, and habitability requirements.<sup>7</sup> Using warehouses, tents, office buildings and other facilities not meant for human habitation is a violation of individuals civil liberty.

**HB 630 would prevent the significant strain on local resources and community that are required by such detention facilities.** Not only do detention facilities often lack adequate infrastructure for safe and humane detention, so do the surrounding communities, for “detention facilities impose substantial and specialized infrastructure demands—including transportation access, water, sewer and energy costs, staffing, medical care, and emergency services.”<sup>8</sup> Recently, in other areas of the country, legislative leaders have pushed back against the use of facilities not originally designed for the purpose of housing or detaining people from being used as detention centers because “existing medical and human service infrastructure ... is insufficient to support ... a large detainee population.”<sup>9</sup>

**HB 630 offers a simple, logical and moral safeguard against preventable detention deaths;** if a space was not originally designed and constructed for the purpose of housing or detaining human beings, it should not be used to hold civil or criminal detainees. This protects detainees, customs officials and all Marylanders, while promoting human dignity and basic safety standards.

**Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on HB 630.**

*Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.*

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<sup>1</sup> Government data provided by ICE in response to a FOIA request, processed by the Deportation Data Project. Accessed January 19, 2026. Retrieved from <https://deportationdata.org/data/processed/ice.html>

<sup>2</sup> Maucione, S. (2026, January 27). *DHS buys warehouse in Maryland to possibly hold detained immigrants*. WYPR. <https://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2026-01-27/dhs-buys-warehouse-in-maryland-to-possibly-hold-detained-immigrants>

<sup>3</sup> Jassem, F. (2026, February 3). *Deaths in US immigration detention reach highest level on record*. The National. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/2026/02/03/deaths-in-us-immigration-detention-reach-highest-level-on-record/>

<sup>4</sup> Flack, E. & Morton, R. (Feb 13, 2026). Raskin calls Baltimore ICE facility “inhumane” after visit, whistleblower reveals abuses. WUSA9. <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/investigations/ice-kristi-noem-baltimore-detention-facility-jamie-raskin-overcrowding-trump/65-4245187b-db2d-4a2c-b204-7abe9c02093d>

<sup>5</sup> Bell v. Wolfish, 441 U.S. 520 (1979). <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/441/520/>

<sup>6</sup> Jones v. Blanas, 393 F.3d 918 (9th Cir. 2004). <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-9th-circuit/1449314.html>

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. (2016). *Performance-based national detention standards 2011 (revised 2016)*. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/detention-standards/2011/pbnds2011r2016.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Senator Roger Wicker. (Feb 4, 2026). Proposed ICE facility threatens Byhalia, Mississippi economy and infrastructure. [Press Release]. <https://www.wicker.senate.gov/2026/2/wicker-proposed-ice-facility-threatens-byhalia-mississippi-economy-and-infrastructure>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.