

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, Maryland Chapter
Ioana Stoica on behalf of the Core Leadership Team
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TESTIMONY ON HB630 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Original Design and Construction

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

FROM: Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, Maryland Chapter

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action Maryland has been organizing in our state since 2019 to build a more equitable society where everyone has what they need to thrive in order to dismantle white supremacist systems of oppression. We represent over 1200 Jews and allies from across the state and we stand in unequivocal support of our immigrant neighbors as we **submit this testimony in support of HB630: Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Original Design and Construction.**

As Jews, the care we hold for our neighbors is deeply embedded in our traditions and faith. There is no commandment that is more frequently mentioned in the Torah than the call to protect the stranger. Throughout our history, Jews have been strangers in the land - and stories of our migration are as old as Abraham, who was called to leave his homeland, and as Moses who first endured exile before leading the people out of oppression. Looking back, it's sobering to realize how deeply the Torah understood the destructive power of xenophobia—the hatred of strangers. It's as if the Torah is saying, with unflinching clarity: sympathy and prayers won't suffice. Only real, collective action can push back against hate.

We are writing today to ask you to take clear and decisive action against the traumatic imprisonment of our immigrant neighbors by passing HB630, a bill that would prevent federal authorities from purchasing warehouses or other buildings not constructed for this purpose from being used as detention centers.

Detention camps in the U.S. are a violation of basic human rights, causing immense suffering for those who find themselves detained—often for seeking safety, freedom, or a better life. These facilities, which primarily house migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, are marked by overcrowding, inhumane conditions, and a complete disregard for the dignity of the individuals inside. Children are separated from their families, people endure physical and emotional trauma, and legal due process is often delayed or denied. The very existence of these camps reflects a system that prioritizes punitive measures over compassion, and deterrence over empathy.

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Instead of providing refuge to those fleeing violence and persecution, these camps become places of fear, hopelessness, and despair, reinforcing a dangerous narrative that dehumanizes immigrants and undermines the values of justice and fairness that the country claims to uphold.

Detaining hard working immigrants while separating families does not solve any problem, it just manifests cruelty. **We respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB630.**

Respectfully,

Ioana Stoica, Emily Blank, Varda Fink, Laura Gillette, Helena Kaiser, Paula Martin, Deborah Rosenfelt, Judith Sennesh

Core Leadership Team

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