

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

I offer favorable testimony in support of HB 630 – Correctional Services - Immigration Detention Facilities - Original Design and Construction. I am compelled to support this bill because we have seen how DHS operates them already. DHS's lack of human rights and dignity is clear. For example, in McAllen, Texas at the "Ursula facility, there is documented evidence that conditions there resemble torture. Adults and children are held in extreme cold, constant light, overcrowded cells or chain-link cages on concrete floors.

Maryland failed to stop the purchase of a warehouse with no plumbing, electrical systems, or water infrastructure in Washington County; the sale was finalized without public notice. In Williamsport, millions of dollars were paid for a future detention center that was not designed for human habitation. The transaction was completed before the community heard about it. Washington County lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in tax revenues

DoD contracts bypass standard oversight and public notice; acquisitions like the one in Williamsport, MD can now happen faster and in total secrecy. Maryland warehouses that were never intended for domestic detention can be purchased to house human beings before the public knows what is happening. Maryland must maintain standards for what operates within its borders.

House Bill 630 responds to this threat to our democracy and to the moral fabric of our state. HB 630 requires that detention facilities operate only in buildings specifically constructed for that purpose. Along with the Dignity Not Detention Act, HB 630 ensures that any facility — federal or private — meets basic human habitation standards and prevents Maryland from becoming a place where prisons fail to meet the minimum standards of decency. Without this bill, we have no recourse when the next warehouse is purchased through DoD channels.

We must pass House Bill 630 and ensure that Maryland requires detention facilities to be built for humans. We cannot allow human beings, many of whom are our beloved neighbors, to be warehoused in places that are not built to support human habitation.