

Testimony on House Bill - Favorable

HB 630 - Correctional 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,

I, Cynthia Sokolow of Howard County, MD offer **favorable testimony in support of HB 630.**

This bill prohibits a person from operating a detention facility in a building that has not been designed or constructed for the purpose of housing individuals.

The current U.S. administration seeks to deport one million immigrants and asylum seekers from our country each year. The goal is to convert large empty warehouses nationwide into detainment centers for hundreds of men, women and children at once. Recently buildings in Elkridge and near Hagerstown have been potential sites.

I am the daughter of a Holocaust survivor whose parents were detained in the Nazi concentration camp Terezin before their deportation to the death camp Treblinka. (The Nazis kept impeccable records of Holocaust victims which are available from the Yad Vashem archives.) Terezin prisoners suffered overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and disease, despite it being the “model ghetto” for propaganda purposes.

Now, 85 years later, I fear a Terezin here in Maryland. Warehouses are not designed for housing conditions, even for a few hours. Our US lawmakers, including Senators Van Hollen, Senator Alsobrooks and Representative Delaney, have expressed alarm regarding any kind of building conversion into a holding center. Information on lack of adequate plumbing, inhumane conditions and refusal of medical treatment for inhabitants will not be made public. Our own neighbors will needlessly suffer in a 2026 Terezin. We cannot let that happen.

HB 630 will hamper the U.S. Administration from setting up these kinds of holding facilities in Maryland. **A favorable vote of HB 630 is urgent.**

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Sokolow
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