

HB0630

Judiciary: March 9, 2026

## FAVORABLE

Testimony submitted by:

Ann Bristow, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor, Frostburg State University  
92 Carey Run, Frostburg, MD 21532. (Garrett County)

Local and State governments are empowered to develop regulations and laws which protect public health, among other endeavors. Regarding the siting and operation of an immigrant detention facility, all zoning and other regulatory provisions pertaining to housing or detaining individuals should apply. Currently, this is not the case, due to a “loophole” in Maryland law which our federal government has exploited by seeking to house immigrants in a warehouse designed for commercial activities.

Normally, review of housing or detaining individuals would consider such public health concerns as water supply, sewage load, and health care and emergency response capacity. Consideration of local resources would be evaluated in the context of increased demand on these resources by a proposed housing or detention facility. Not considering these factors will endanger local health from infectious or contagious diseases, for example.

On 3/4/26, Immigration and Customs Enforcement confirmed to NBC news an outbreak of measles at their El Paso, TX detention facility, Camp East Montana, where 14 persons were ill and another 112 isolated. It is likely that people who are worried about being detained are less likely to receive vaccinations, thus heightening their vulnerability. It is unlikely that detention centers constructed in large open air facilities like warehouses will have the ability to properly isolate (e.g., negative pressure rooms) or care for ill or exposed detainees.

ICE's proposed Hagerstown Maryland detention center would need 209,000 gallons of water a day, and no one has established what impact this would have on the local water supply nor efflux on waters of the Potomac. On 3/5/26 the Secretaries of the Maryland Department of the Environment, Department of Natural Resources and Department of Transportation wrote to the Department of Homeland Security expressing their concerns relevant to their Departments as well as the absence of transparent public engagement. I expect that you will give serious consideration to their concerns.

Please provide maximal and appropriate protection for Maryland residents, be they detained or not, by correcting this oversight and passing HB0630 (relevant text below). Thank you.

(D) A PERSON MAY NOT OPERATE AN IMMIGRATION DETENTION FACILITY AT A BUILDING, STRUCTURE, OR FACILITY THAT WAS NOT ORIGINALLY DESIGNED AND CONSTRUCTED FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOUSING OR DETAINING INDIVIDUALS.