

Dear Delegate Schindler,

I am writing in favor of the proposed bill HB0630 prohibiting a person from operating 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. This is very important to me as a community member living near the proposed site for the federal ICE facility in Hagerstown, MD. As elected representatives, all politicians are expected to uphold the values of human rights, due process, and the U.S. Constitution. This includes enforcing rules and guidelines that support basic human dignity and to question whether large warehouses like this can realistically meet humane standards of care for thousands of people without an impact on the surrounding region.

Recent reports and videos from the ICE Baltimore Field Office show "short-term" holding rooms filled to the maximum with people who are being held for days. Detainees have been denied basic hygiene, timely medical care, and access to legal counsel. Recent reports of deaths and medical neglect in detention facilities raise serious concerns about the ability of ICE to detain people within the limits of the law and basic human decency. I'm also deeply concerned about the impact detention has on families, particularly children, within the boundaries of our county.

In addition to the severe ethical concerns this type of facility presents for our community, there are other more practical concerns that putting people in warehouses will create. Converting a warehouse into a detainment facility creates an additional burden on our community's resources such as water, sewer, and the demand on our local emergency, fire, EMT, and police as they will be the first responders to 1,500+ detainees and staff. This drains resources from our neighbors without federal reimbursement and creates a potential crisis for residents of our county.

Nationally, discretionary releases of detainees have plummeted by nearly 90%. People are being held indefinitely without bond, even those with no criminal records. The UN has recently (Jan 2026) decried the "dehumanization" and "routine abuse" of migrants in U.S. interior detention. As an educator and an active member of my community who cares about the long-term health of our region, I'm concerned that if this facility is allowed to open, it could have long-term consequences for businesses and the infrastructure of our area and other areas in our state. I would strongly encourage you to request a tour of a similar facility, if you have not, to see with your own eyes what is in store for the people of our region if DHS is allowed to proceed with their plans for this facility.

The DHS proposal reflects a broader pattern of federal decisions shifting long-term operational, infrastructure, and emergency costs onto local governments without corresponding authority or compensation. Decisions of this magnitude affect public confidence in county and state leadership, particularly when made without transparency or public consent.

We appreciate you sponsoring this bill and how you have advocated for our community

and others thus far. We will continue to show up and support what is best for our community and the people in it and hope you will do the same.

With great concern,

Ginny Ritchie  
Hagerstown, MD