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Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Chapter of Doctors for Camp Closure strongly supports HB 677. We are part of the national Doctors for Camp Closure organization which is a non-partisan organization of over 2,200 physicians and health care professionals from all specialties who oppose inhumane detention of migrants and refugees who are attempting to enter the United States of America.

As physicians we know all too well the danger that immigration detention poses to the people who are detained as well as to their families. We know that when immigrants are detained, either in government jails or in for profit ICE detention centers, their physical and psychological health suffers. Sometimes the health effects are so severe that the immigrants die from what would be otherwise treatable illnesses. Many detained migrants have died from suicide. As recently as December 2019 a detained Nigerian man in Maryland's own Snow Hill prison from an apparent suicide. This could not have happened if there were no IGSA agreement, which HB 677 will end.

The for profit prison corporation that is hoping to build in Maryland, ICA, has a history of denying medically necessary treatments to their detainees. Outbreaks of preventable diseases such as mumps and chicken pox are quite frequent. Equally devastating is the psychological suffering of their inmates.

I know from first hand experience that ICA denied critically needed medicine to one of their sick inmates. Another inmate, despite suffering from PTSD and depression, was then pepper sprayed, which is quite toxic.

As physicians, we also know that the family members of the detained person suffers just as much. When a parent is detained, the family loses the wages from that parent. Just as devastating is the fear, depression and anxiety that the children experience when they no longer have their parent at home. Children lose their ability to sleep and focus on their school work.

This bill needs to be passed immediately. Every day that we wait means that more detained people suffer, get sick and sometimes die. Every day that we wait means that spouses and children become more and more financially destitute and depressed, unable to support themselves and unable to properly function at school.

We urge a favorable report on HB 677.

Doctors for Camp Closure is a national nonpartisan organization of healthcare professionals that opposes the inhumane detention of immigrants and asylum-seekers in the United States