



Testimony in support of HB677 - 2020

Correctional Services - Immigration Detention - Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention Act)

To: Hon. Luke Clippinger, Chair, and members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Rev. Charlene Belsom Zellmer, Congregation Action Network

Date: February 25, 2020

I am writing in **support of House Bill 677**, Correctional Services - Immigration Detention - Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention Act), on behalf of the Congregation Action Network. The Congregation Action Network is a of faith communities in Washington, DC, and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs acting in solidarity to end detention, deportation, profiling, and criminalization of immigrants and demanding and upholding justice, dignity, safety, and family unity. We represent 75 congregations and a thousands of members throughout the capital area, including over 25 congregations with thousands of members in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. We live our faith in advocacy for our immigrant neighbors.

As people of faith committed to ending the detention and deportation of immigrants, we adhere to the sacred texts of most major faiths that call for welcoming the stranger and treating each other with love, dignity, respect, and compassion. We believe in liberation and that immigrant families should be united and free - never incarcerated.

HB677 would end state and local agency involvement in the cruel and immoral incarceration of immigrants. It would require transparency in any zoning or permitting decisions taken by local jurisdictions that enable private facilities that intend to incarcerate immigrants within Maryland.

I pray that you open your hearts and your minds to the facts of this bill that will lead our State to act with decisiveness. Let us stand on the side of love, morality and goodness.

I strongly urge you to reach a favorable report for HB677.

Respectfully yours,

Rev. Charlene Belsom Zellmer, Interfaith Minister

Congregation Action Network Steering Committee, Cluster Leader, Montgomery County

Sanctuary for Rosa at Cedar Lane Leadership Group

Bethesda, Maryland