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HB 677 - SUPPORT
CORRECTIONAL SERVICES - IMMIGRATION DETENTION -
PROHIBITION (DIGNITY NOT DETENTION ACT)

Judiciary Committee

February 25, 2020

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice) Frederick supports HB 677, the “Dignity Not Detention” bill because it will ban all private ICE prisons and eliminate all IGSA’s to house detainees in public detention centers. SURJ works to bring public awareness to the facets of our society that discriminate and hinder progress to people of color through political activism, educational efforts, and discussions with entities that present, allow or endorse offensive or discriminatory symbolism, activities or behavior to the public arena. SURJ also collaborates with and has helped support local groups that work to empower at risk youth, that seek to teach people their rights, that are seeking greater equity in our public schools, and that celebrate the diversity that makes America great.

As a local branch of a national organization that seeks to help create racial equity and dismantle white supremacy in our community and society, we think it is imperative to pass this bill for several reasons. In our community and others, relationship between local law enforcement and ICE has led to the profiling of people based on skin color, nationality or language spoken. Our county has already been successfully sued once for civil rights violations due to our County Sheriff’s activities in trying to find immigrants to report to ICE. In addition, there is a conflict of interest in having private entities provide detention as it is in their best interest to detain more people, not to work towards a more equitable and opportunity-rich society for all. There are grave disparities based on race in our national justice system and our local justice system, therefore the inevitable outcome of this conflict of interest will impact people of color more than it will impact white people. Maryland is a better place with equity and opportunity for all.

We urge a favorable report on HB 677