

**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:

As members of Together We Will, Harford County (TWW) we urge you to give a favorable report on House Bill 677, the Dignity Not Detention Act, to keep for-profit prisons out of Maryland. TWW is a coalition of community members seeking social and economic justice in Maryland. We represent more than 250 Harford County residents of all faiths, backgrounds and political parties. We stand opposed to any municipality in Maryland profiting from detention of vulnerable populations, both immigrant and native-born. As Maryland citizens, quite cognizant of what our government does in our name, we are dedicated to just and fair treatment for all residents of our state.

Unfortunately, the percentage of immigrant detainees housed in private prisons has increased steadily in the last decade. And a small number of corporations reap tremendous profits through federal contracts, ultimately at great cost to the taxpayer. These corporations, including ICA which is seeking to open a detention center in Queen Anne's county, have a history of maximizing profits at the expense of humane treatment of detainees and fair compensation for employees. For example, ICA's Farmville, Virginia Detention Center has been investigated by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties in response to complaints about poor medical care, use of force and restraints, lack of religious accommodation, and poor environmental health and safety. As Maryland citizens we oppose bringing that model to our own state.

As members of TWW we believe Maryland should not allow prison facilities that are not held to a high standard. Allowing for-profit prisons in Maryland, especially under contract with ICE, will be detrimental to all of us. Adding more detention beds result in more community raids, more businesses disrupted, more people detained for civil violations.

The consequences for our communities are severe. Our friends and neighbors, including those who have called Maryland home for decades, live in fear of being deported, forcibly separated from their children, and prevented from supporting their families. Immigrant communities become less likely to trust local government, especially local law enforcement, and less likely to report crimes, making all of us less safe. We urge a favorable report on HB 677. Thank you.

Jan Hirschfeld  
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Together We Will, Harford County