



**SB478/HB16 - SUPPORT
CORRECTIONAL SERVICES - IMMIGRATION
DETENTION - PROHIBITION
(DIGNITY NOT DETENTION ACT)**

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Takoma Park Mobilization urges a favorable report on SB478, the Dignity Not Detention Act. As a grassroots organization with over 2300 members, we work toward a just and equitable society; we work in partnership with organizations that represent the most impacted, while standing with the least powerful among us.

SB478 would stop immigration detention (public and private) in Maryland. How does this relate to Takoma Park Mobilization's core value of shared humanity? Among the most dehumanizing things you can do to someone is to lock them up. Privacy and basic choices (what to wear, what to eat, who to spend time with) are denied. Medical neglect, violence, and human rights violations are endemic. People who are detained can no longer provide for their families as breadwinners and/or caregivers, and can no longer contribute to their communities as workers and volunteers (in churches, schools, community sports leagues, and more). And detention is a form of family separation; approximately 6 million U.S. citizen children live with at least one family member who is undocumented, and after a raid or arrest, the majority of children display multiple behavioral changes as their family is thrown into turmoil.

SB478 is urgent; Maryland residents—immigrant and non-immigrant—cannot afford to wait for another session. Medical and human rights abuses in ICE detention, including county facilities in Maryland, were well-documented before COVID-19; detention has now become even more dangerous. ICE deportation, which commonly follows detention, has more deeply torn apart families and communities, and it has seeded COVID-19 outbreaks in vulnerable countries worldwide. Immigrant communities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, while contributing as essential workers to the systems that allow many other people to remain safe; yet despite paying taxes, undocumented immigrants generally don't qualify for financial relief. Being targeted by ICE is ever more cruel.

It bears noting that ICE has not always existed (it was established in 2003), and immigration detention was rare before the rise in mass incarceration in the 1980s and 1990s. A number of alternatives to detention exist, though each type needs its own examination; immigration detention is not inevitable, not necessary, and not humane. Maryland needs to recognize and reject this destructive trap.

We therefore urge a favorable report on SB478.

Submitted for Takoma Park Mobilization by Laura Atwood, laura_a79@hotmail.com, 301-587-3876, February 10, 2021