

February 7, 2021

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB478
**Correctional Services – Immigration Detention – Prohibition (Dignity Not
Detention Act)**

My name is Phyllis Oresky, and I have been a Maryland resident for 64 years, in District 22 for four of them. I am writing to you today in support of SB478, the Dignity Not Detention Bill.

On a personal note, my grandparents came to this country from Europe as immigrants, and my Jewish faith teaches me to “love your neighbor as yourself” and to treat every human being with respect and dignity, regardless of their country of origin. I am a member of Mishkan Torah Synagogue in Greenbelt, and a core team member of Bend the Arc Prince George’s County Minyan, and we work to better the lives of all Americans and all Marylanders, no matter what their race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or place of birth.

Unfortunately, these values are not universally practiced in this country at this time, as immigrant families are being torn apart, and as productive members of society are being incarcerated instead of being allowed to contribute to our communities, their families, and to the economy. ICE is being utilized by the federal government to detain and separate people, and states are profiting from contracting out beds for ICE detainees.

I am deeply troubled that the state of Maryland engages in this cooperation and in profiting off a relationship with ICE, and furthermore, that county and state officials are considering expanding this collaboration by possibly opening up even more detention centers in our state. We cannot wait and hope that the federal government under a new administration fixes ICE abuses; administrations will come and go, and these problems have persisted. We must act now, and lead the way for other states by example.

The Dignity Not Detention Bill will ban new or renewed contracts with detention facilities operated by private corporations, and will require the existing detention agreements to end the contract by June 2021. No new centers should be built. The current system offers no justice for immigrants.

I urge you to support this important legislation and respectfully urge a favorable report on SB478.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Oresky