



**Testimony in Support of SB 478 - Correctional Services – Immigration Detention
– Prohibition (Dignity Not Detention Act)**

3111 Mary Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21214

February 7, 2021

To the Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing in support of the Dignity Not Detention Act (SB 478). This bill is a critically needed measure that would help reduce widespread exploitation of the incarceration and hardships of immigrants here in Maryland.

If passed by the Maryland General Assembly and signed into law by the governor, this measure would prohibit new contracts or renewal of existing contracts with state-based detention facilities operated either entirely or in part by private corporations; guarantee that the general public is sufficiently informed of any plans for new detention facilities within Maryland's borders; and require local entities with immigration detention agreements now in place to terminate those contracts once and for all by June of this year.

I want to underscore how these detention facilities here in the Free State have too often become high-risk and even deadly places for many immigrants who have been incarcerated for what are at most civil violations. As detainees, these individuals have been inhumanely subjected to everything from a disproportionate number of strip searches to abysmal medical services.

Our state can do better, must do better, to ensure that the rights of immigrants among us are not trampled on and that these individuals are likewise given the safe and equitable treatment that we all deserve. As far as this social justice priority is concerned, SB 478 is not a panacea; it is a vital step in the right direction, however.

So please, please, please search your hearts, look way beyond the profit motive of private corporations, embrace the public good instead, and vote in favor of SB 478. Thank you for giving this crucial bill your fullest and fairest consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert Cullen

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