

February 7, 2021

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

My name is Emily Blank and I have been a Maryland resident for most of my life, and for the last 15 years in District 47a. I write as a core leader of the Bend the Arc - Prince George's County Minyan, as a member of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ), and as a member of Oseh Shalom Synagogue.

In the words of poet Warsan Shire, "No one leaves home unless/ home is the mouth of a shark... /when home won't let you stay." I write not only as a Jew who feels called to support immigrants in the name of Jewish teaching, but as a grandchild of immigrants. My grandparents arrived in this country prior to World War II, fortunately, for both them and their descendants. Given the immigration laws during the Shoah, they would not have been allowed to migrate to the West, and it is likely they would have perished. That our "blue" state cooperates with ICE to hold immigrants hostage in three facilities, and that it is looking to potentially open even more detention centers for immigrants, is a travesty.

As a grandchild of immigrants who only through luck and privilege came to be citizens of this country, I fully support others who have not been as fortunate as my family. These individuals should not be ripped away from their families and be held indefinitely in detention, and Maryland should not support ICE and other federal agencies in implementing these cruel policies.

The US holds incarcerates more immigrants than any other country in the world, to the detriment not only of our values, and their families, but to the detriment of our economy as well. Research studies from agencies such as the ACLU and Cato have showed that immigrants positively contribute to the economy, and holding them in detention does not bestow that benefit.

I support the Dignity Not Detention Act, which abolishes all contracts between our state of Maryland and ICE, and prevents the building of new centers in our state to be used for immigrant detention. Please, stand up and support this important legislation. I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB478.

Emily C. Blank