

February 4, 2026

County Council of Howard County, Maryland

**Testimony in Support of CB 016- 2026 and CB017-2026 – County Executive –
Immigration Enforcement – Guidance – Emergency Act**

Good evening.

My name is Abdun Matin, and I am a longtime Howard County and Maryland resident. I am here today to express my strong belief in immigrants' rights to live and work safely without fear of deportation, as supported by Council Bill 16 17-2026.

I am an immigrant myself. I was born and raised in Pakistan and came to the United States in 2013. Being an immigrant is not easy. Many of us came to the United States from countries and societies with less opportunities and less free will. Leaving behind the home you grew up in, is not an easy decision, but for many, many immigrants, it is what they are willing to do to have more opportunities and stability for their families.

After sacrificing so much to simply try and have better lives for their children, it is wrong, unfair, and unjust that immigrants today must live in an atmosphere of constant fear. Families are afraid to leave their homes, parents worry about being separated from their children, and hardworking people live with the anxiety that any normal day could end in being detained.

ICE was created with the purpose of promoting safety and enforcing immigration laws within the legal framework. However, over time, its actions have strayed from that mission.

What I see, and experience myself as an immigrant, is not safety or justice, but intimidation and trauma that disproportionately impacts people of color and lower-income people. ICE's brutality is stripping people of dignity and due process. How can Howard County thrive if our residents are forced to live in fear?

No system should be allowed to terrorize the very people who contribute so deeply to our community and belong here. We need this bill because it strengthens immigrant protections against potential ICE actions. ICE's national crackdown has created fear, confusion, and harm, right here in Howard County. And right here in Howard County, we need a bill that affirms our county's commitment to civil rights, due process, and protecting all of our hardworking immigrants. Howard County is for everyone, and everyone's rights should be respected.

I urge you to vote in favor of CB 16 and 17-2026. Thank you.

Good evening, Council Members.

My name is Aeleen Tarr.

I've been a resident of Howard County for the bulk of my life and currently own a home and work in HoCo.

I would like to thank Liz Walsh for introducing CB17-2026. I am FOR CB17-2026; as I believe it is in the best interest of everyone that lives, works, visits, and travels through Howard County that we leverage our local authority to push back against a federal police force that terrorizes communities from behind a mask.

As I've watched with increasing horror over the methods our current federal executive administration has deployed over this past year to demonstrate their supposed strength, I've wondered if and when this chaos will come to our doorstep. The needle is moving closer by the day as I hear reports of ICE roaming Elkridge, Jessup, and Columbia – and then a car left on the side of the road from an ICE abduction right near where I attended high school.

My thoughts become more burdened with worry and fear for the safety of those I care about.

Will my dear co-worker and her young boys be detained during school drop off? Will my non-white family members be deported despite being US citizens? What can we do to keep these people in our lives and community safe? Over the last month, we have watched agents deployed to Minnesota routinely violate the constitutional rights of those they interact with: punishing those exercising their 1st amendment right by adding them to a “domestic terrorist list”, blatantly ignoring the 4th amendment through warrantless entry and mass surveillance and violently assaulting, abducting, and dumping citizens in parking lots and wooded areas, and denying due process or timely access to legal counsel to those detained.

I appreciate that as a blue state, we don't have the power to fully stop what is happening at a federal level, but we do have a say in how our community will rise to the occasion.

We **must** develop and enact explicit guidance to limit ICE/CBP's ability to infiltrate our county, harass and abduct its most vulnerable inhabitants. We must implement safe spaces, keep ICE/CBP out of our databases, and do whatever is within our power to keep Howard County from becoming the next battleground against human decency.

My hope is that the council votes to pass CB17-2026 and works to provide strong legal backing to keep ICE/CBP from harming our community.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

TESTIMONY OF ANN W. BARNES, CHAIR, CHRIST CHURCH INTERFAITH
REFUGEE MINISTRY in support of CB16-2026 and CB17-2026

4 FEBRUARY 2026

Members of the Howard County Council, my name is Ann Barnes. I have proudly lived in our proudly diverse Howard County for nearly 38 years.

Today I come before you as Chair of the Christ Church Interfaith Refugee Ministry – a ministry comprised of members of some 17 different faith-based congregations, eleven of which are here in Howard County. We are Christians and Jews working together to serve mostly, but not exclusively, Muslim refugees from Afghanistan, many of whom live, work, shop, and go to school here in Howard County. Last year we helped more than 70 refugees; we have on-going relationships of help and support with nine refugee families.

Every one of these refugees – every single one – is legally here in the United States. Many have permanent residence status, known as green cards.

News of the almost ready ICE detention facility in Elkridge has spread like wildfire through the immigrant and refugee communities here in Howard County. This location, at the intersection of 95 and Route 100, is only a stone's throw from the many immigrants who live along Howard County's Route 1 corridor, and their fear is rapidly rising.

Just the idea of increased ICE presence in connection a detention facility is already causing harm to their sense of safety, their health, their welfare.

- Already, parents are worried about putting their children on the school bus.
- Already, parents are asking who will take care of their children if they are taken away by ICE.
- Already, everyone who drives to work or who earns their living by driving is fearful of the routes they take, fearful of making even the smallest misstep in a traffic violation, fearful of reporting an accident.
- Already, those working as Uber, Lyft, DoorDash, Amazon delivery drivers are wondering if they are safe and if they will get to return home after a long day or night of work.
- Already, refugees attending Howard Community College to learn English or to study part-time are worried about ICE raids on campus.
- Already, those who work in our county's incredible array of ethnic restaurants are worried about raids at their workplace.

- Already, those who work at BWI, where many immigrants work, are worried about increased ICE presence at the airport and what that might mean for them.
- Already, they are worried about shopping at the many small halal markets that can now be found all across our county.
- Already, they fear any interaction, of any kind, with law enforcement personnel of any kind.
- Already, they are worried about what will happen to their families if they are too fearful to continue to go to work at their low paying jobs.
- Already, they are worried about the very real possibility of gun violence.

These families have come to love living here in Howard County as they work so hard to build new lives for themselves and for their children. They are grateful for the genuine welcome they have received here in our county. They are grateful to be able to live in a county where we put laws into place to support and protect people not born in the United States. They know that is not true everywhere and they value our county for putting its money where its mouth is about our collective values. They want to contribute to our county and our communities, to give back, to pay forward their gratitude for the opportunity to live here, peaceably, and in safety.

Now they are looking to us, and to you, our elected Howard County leaders, to do all you can to protect them from the too often unlawful and increasingly violent actions being taken by our federal government in the name of immigration enforcement.

Locating an immigration detention center in Howard County will not only further destabilize our sizeable immigrant population, but it will have numerous direct, negative impacts on many, many U.S. citizen residents of Howard County as it increases fear, depresses economic stability, causes disruption, potentially disrupts the peace.

On behalf of the refugees we serve, of the many Howard County volunteers across the Interfaith Refugee Ministry, I urge you, I implore you, and I beg you to please vote in favor of CB16 and CB 17.

Thank you.

Hello, my name is Dan Jorquera. I have been a Maryland resident my entire life, most of it spent within Howard County. I support this legislation because I believe it will protect our community. We do not need to guess what an ICE facility and increased ICE presence will do to the community. We have the data.

Like it or not, Maryland is a blue state. According to ICE's own records, ^{in red states} around 60% of their arrests take place in prisons in jails. In blue states... around 70% happen in the community. According to multiple studies, areas targeted by ICE see legal immigrants avoiding bringing their children to school, going to church, or even going to work. Decades of studies show that building prisons or detention centers can harm home values, retail sales, and employment. An ICE detention facility would put a chilling effect on our local economy. But it gets worse.

According to an American Immigration Council report, since Trump took office, arrests within communities have surged 600%. I believe there is no one here that would be against getting violent criminals off the streets or kicked out of the country. But that is simply not happening. Less than 6% of those held in ICE facilities in June of last year were violent convicts. 74% had no criminal convictions at all. That's more than 6,000 people.

The White House has always provided monthly, detailed deportation data, until Trump. Now, we're dependent on DHS press releases with no citations. According to TRAC Reports, actual deportations involving ICE have only increased about 7% since last year, despite ICE now having a budget higher than the US Marine Corps. But it gets worse.

We know that ICE has detained at least 170 US citizens in 2025, at least until they stopped actively tracking the total number of U.S. citizens incorrectly detained during these operations. 32 people died in ICE detention centers in 2025 - the highest since 2004. In at least 30 ICE involved shootings, 8 people have died. We know that ICE training has reduced hiring qualifications and lowered training from 5 months to just 47 days. This new force is bigger and more untrained than ever, making it dangerous for communities.

The leaders of ICE want us to believe their mission is to get violent criminals off the streets and out of the country. But by every metric, ICE has failed in that mission. By every metric, inviting ICE here would damage our community. It should be our goal to make our communities better. Not worse. Thank you for your time.

Sources

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Hello. My name is Dr. Elizabeth Taylor. I am a Dermatologist. I stand united with County Executive Calvin Ball, and I thank him for his support for our county.

I work at Allison Linqvist Dermatology, a private practice located at 6518 Meadowridge Road in Elkridge, MD. We've served the community as an ambulatory clinic in this location since 2009. Recently, we expanded our office size and renewed our lease, committing ourselves to 15 more years in this location. The building where I work is immediately adjacent to the proposed location for the Howard County ICE detention facility at 6522 Meadowridge Road. Our medical office shares a parking lot with the proposed location for the ICE facility with one single point of entry and egress to the main road.

My patients are in and out of the parking lot: children, adults, elderly patients. There is only one entrance into the parking lot where the buildings are located. Protests are likely at the entrance and parking areas. Even though the protestors may have peaceful intent, the escalation of violence we've seen against detainees and protesters and the potential for collateral victims, has me concerned for the employees and patients of our practice. Additionally, there is the reasonable fear of our patients being racially profiled, and detained or arrested, regardless of their citizenship or residency status, just for walking in a parking lot near an ICE facility.

The attempt by ICE to fly under the radar into this building is without consideration for the dangers and impact on our community. The proposed location will be disruptive to businesses and the safety of their employees and patrons. It could devastate our business, which we, as mentioned, made significant investments to expand and a commitment to stay. We cannot just pack up and move offices. And recent events do not give me confidence that ICE personnel are trained to or instructed to act with reasonable restraint and de-escalation tactics to prevent violence in the execution of their duties. I thank our county leadership for recognizing the problem and moving quickly to intervene.

I agree with Calvin Ball who says, "we continue to witness the devastating consequences of federal enforcement actions across our nation including the loss of life and civil unrest.... Local government needs to act with clarity," I come to you to implore you to "act before harm occurs, and not after." Do not let ICE move into a privately owned building in a commercial zone adjacent to medical offices with significant numbers of civilians in this shared commercial space. Thank you.

Chair Jones, Vice Chair Rigby, Councilpersons Jung, Walsh, and Yungmann:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of bill CB16. My name is Ellie Newberger and I'm in 10th grade at Atholton High School. I've lived in Columbia for 11 years.

Now, more than ever, it's important for us to come together as a community to support and protect each other. My parents chose to move to Howard County because it is a strong and diverse county that has many opportunities for everyone. It breaks my heart to see that our federal government is trying to tear families and our community apart.

I'm so grateful for the support that this bill has been receiving. Stopping this detention center is important but I hope you and County Executive Ball are only seeing it as a first step. There are so many more things that the Howard County Government needs to do, to keep our community safe from ICE.

We can learn a lot from what like-minded local governments have done in other states. For example, the City of Evanston, Illinois, in the Chicago suburbs is a great role model for Howard County. Their city council created ICE-free zones on all property owned by the city. The Evanston city government also helped distribute know-your-rights resources to help protect their community.

Testimony in support of CB16

Eleanor Newberger

4 February 2026

Another really important policy that the City of Evanston implemented was to have their police department send a police supervisor to every reported immigration enforcement scene, to document what happens and collect evidence for future civil rights claims.

There are more things that have worked in other states that you should put into place right away too. You need to open a reporting hotline so that residents can spread the word about ICE activity in their neighborhoods. The county government also needs to partner with community groups and nonprofits to hold “Know your rights” training sessions, as well as initiate community safety plans to ensure that residents know what to do when the time comes. And an online portal needs to be created on the county government website where residents can upload pictures and videos of ICE activity, which the Maryland Attorney General’s Civil Rights Division can use as evidence.

There are also actions you need to take now to put legal and financial assistance in place. An eviction moratorium will help residents who haven’t been able to pay their rent because ICE is keeping them from going to their jobs. The county also needs to coordinate with community partners so that individuals and families who are impacted by raids and protest arrests get connected with the legal services they need. All these things will help our community stay safe and alert in regards to ICE.

Thank you for supporting CB16 to stop ICE detention centers from being built in our county. But I hope this is the just first of many emergency bills to come. Your work to protect the people of Howard County from the agents of the racist, fascist White House is just beginning. Please look

Testimony in support of CB16

Eleanor Newberger

4 February 2026

to your counterparts in local government across the country who have stood up to ICE and learn from their example. We all have no excuse not to be prepared for what's coming.

Thank you.

Testimony in Support of CB 16-2026 - Ghuydar Bashmaf

Good evening County Members of the Council,

My name is Ghuydar Bashmaf, and I am a school and childcare center operator here in Howard County. I want to start by thanking Dr. Ball for introducing CB-16, an important piece of legislation that our county needs.

Schools and childcare centers are meant to be places of safety, stability, and trust. Families entrust us with what matters most—their children—every single day. The placement of an ICE detention center minutes from neighboring schools is fundamentally incompatible with that mission.

As educators, we work tirelessly to create environments where children feel secure enough to learn, explore, and grow. That sense of safety is not abstract—it is the foundation of learning. Detention facilities introduce fear, distraction, and emotional stress into communities, and that stress does not stop at the facility's fence line. It shows up in our classrooms as anxiety, difficulty concentrating, and fear of being seen or heard.

Teachers and administrators are not equipped—nor should we be expected—to manage the emotional fallout of nearby detention activity. Our role is to educate and care for children, not to mitigate the harm caused by land-use decisions that place carceral facilities next to learning environments.

The impact is not felt equally. Students from immigrant and Muslim backgrounds are disproportionately affected. Fear leads to absenteeism, disengagement, and reluctance to seek help or support. When children are afraid that their family or community may be targeted, learning suffers. Schools should never become collateral damage of zoning loopholes.

This is why CB 16-2026 matters.

CB 16-2026 establishes clear, enforceable boundaries that protect educational environments. It prevents detention centers from being mislabeled as "office use" near schools and childcare centers. Most importantly, it aligns zoning law with Howard County's stated commitment to student wellbeing, equity, and inclusion.

The recent permit revocation makes one thing very clear: without CB 16-2026, our communities remain vulnerable. This emergency act closes dangerous loopholes, restores public trust, and ensures that Howard County is proactive—not reactive—when it comes to safeguarding children.

I urge you to pass CB 16-2026 and make it unmistakably clear: our neighborhoods, our schools, and our houses of worship are not zones of fear.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the children and families of this county.

**HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF CB 16-2026
BY JILL MARIE BUSSEY, ESQ.
MARYLAND STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
IMMIGRATION LAW SECTION
4 FEBRUARY 2026 | 6PM**

Good Evening, Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Rigby, and Council Members Walsh, Jung, and Yungmann.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Maryland State Bar Association's (MSBA) Immigration Law Section in support of CB16-2026.

My name is Jill Marie Bussey. I am a member of the MSBA Immigration Law Section Council, the Maryland bar, and the American Immigration Lawyers Association, with more than 25 years of experience in immigration law and policy. I currently serve as Director for Legal Affairs at Global Refuge and have been a Howard County resident for nearly 20 years. I have previously testified before the U.S. House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and before the County Executive and Council, including providing expert testimony on immigration-related legislation.

I am here today on behalf of the MSBA's Immigration Law Section, which includes more than 1,200 private attorneys, judges, and immigration officials. The Section supports CB16-2026, which would amend the Howard County Building Code. While we do not offer expertise on zoning, building codes, or permitting, we bring expertise on the proposed use of facilities for private detention, specifically for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention.

The MSBA Immigration Law Section supports efforts to curb the unnecessary and rapid expansion of immigration detention facilities in Maryland, given the serious impacts detention has on basic human and civil rights and due process. We appreciate the swift action of County Executive Ball and the County Council at a time when the administration is undertaking an unprecedented expansion of immigration enforcement and ICE detention nationwide, including in several Maryland localities.

Our Section opposes efforts by the current administration and Congress to dramatically expand ICE's enforcement and detention capacity. Recent federal appropriations allocate approximately **\$150 billion to immigration enforcement**, including \$45 billion for detention—levels that far exceed historical funding. However, available data on immigration enforcement trends in our region do not demonstrate a corresponding increase in individuals requiring detention, nor do they support the need for new detention facilities in Maryland. This disconnect between funding levels and demonstrated need is particularly stark with respect to proposed facilities in Howard County.

On January 24, 2026, ICE released detention data indicating that there were **70,766 people held in 225 immigration detention facilities across the country** (this does not include people held in temporary or short-term facilities).¹ **This number of detention facilities is double the number used by ICE a year ago.** According to an analysis by Dr. Austin Kocher (a professor at Syracuse University who studies immigration data), “this number represents the highest detained population on public record and the first time the detained population has exceeded 70,000 people.”² This is an alarming rate, particularly since **the vast majority of detained people do not have criminal convictions.** In the fall of 2025, latest data, about 65 percent of all ICE arrests in the state of Maryland were for people with **absolutely no criminal history.** Over 75 percent of arrests had no criminal conviction.

This begs the question, who is ICE detaining and at what cost? The county is right to question why another detention facility is needed at all.

As immigration practitioners, we have grave concerns about the harmful effects of unnecessary detention, which functions as an extrajudicial punishment. **Detention uproots individuals from their families, workplaces, and communities, undermines their ability to support themselves, and severely limits access to legal counsel and meaningful participation in their defense.**³

¹ <https://www.ice.gov/detain/detention-management>

² https://www.wsj.com/opinion/mass-deportation-trump-administration-ice-criminals-minnesota-tim-walz-kristi-noem-7f3bb88b?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

³ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/lawyers-allege-dept-homeland-security-denying-legal-counsel/story?id=129335914>

These harms are compounded by ICE's frequent and rapid transfers between facilities, often before individuals can meet with attorneys and while families struggle for days or weeks to locate loved ones. With more than 1,000 transfer flights each month⁴, this system relies on constant movement to obstruct access to counsel and frustrate the exercise of civil and due process rights.

Serious concerns also remain about detention conditions. In revoking the permit for the planned Elkridge facility, County Executive Ball validly cited significant health and safety risks. Nationally, ICE has failed to meet its own standards⁵, with at least thirty-two deaths in custody last year and six already this year, often with limited transparency and oversight.

For these reasons, the MSBA Immigration Law Section urges the Council to support CB16-2026. Expanding detention in Howard County is unsupported by data, does not enhance public safety, and risks lasting harm to individuals, families, and the community. We urge you to uphold due process, human dignity, and this County's commitment to fairness and justice.

More detention does not mean more safety—it means more trauma, less transparency, and weaker due process.

Thank you.

##END OF TESTIMONY##

⁴ https://humanrightsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/ICE-Flight-Monitor-US-Immigration-Enforcement-Flights-Report_Dec2025.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ice.gov/detain/detention-management>

February 4, 2026

Testimony in support of Bill #16-2026 introduced by the Chairperson at the request of the County Executive Co-sponsored by Opal Jones, Deb Jung, Christiana Rigby and Liz Walsh

Testimony by Margaret Ann Nolan, Esq.

I support “Emergency Act- Amending- Howard County Building Code - I-3 Use group” providing, *inter alia*, that only a government agency is eligible to make application, obtain or hold a permit for the I-3 use group and to provide for the suspension or revocation of a permit.

I appreciate the alacrity with which the Executive and the Council moved to advance this legislative initiative. I thank the entire Council for its unanimous vote to move forward with this bill on an emergency basis. Passage of the bill is critical to protect not only the community, but the potential detainees or individuals rounded up for processing by the federal government. However, I do not believe the bill goes far enough, for the following reasons.

The bill imposes limitations only on privately owned facilities. Given the fact pattern which generated this bill, it is certainly sufficient for this exact moment in time. However, we need to go further to prepare for the inevitable next step.

We are at a serious inflection point in American history. This administration’s hallmarks are corruption, cruelty, incompetence, rapaciousness, and a narcissistic desire for power. It is impervious to public accountability, criticism, and any social norms. What does that mean in the context of this bill? That we should not make the mistake of meeting this one instance with the safest, most narrowly targeted approach to the immediate problem. If we have learned anything over the last decade it is that we should not “obey in advance” by too carefully and conservatively assessing legal risks to resistance. See, On Tyranny - Twenty Lessons From the Twentieth Century, by Timothy Snyder, 2017.

I am asking the Council to expand the limitation of this bill to cover not just privately owned facilities but also any non-County owned detention processing centers. As former Chief of Litigation for the State of Maryland and former County Solicitor I am well aware that there may be unique challenges to attempting to impose limits on federal government authority. However, my experience tells me that we can be creative in crafting a solution that has potential to withstand challenge. Moreover, it is essential that we pursue an alternative--- even if we do not ultimately prevail.

Recent national news coverage has highlighted efforts by other local jurisdictions to prevent the establishment of detention and processing facilities in their jurisdiction. The

February 4, 2026

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Testimony by Margaret Ann Nolan, Esq.

approaches vary. I believe at least one, apparently adopted by Kansas City, may have a colorable chance of success: imposing a 5-year moratorium on the establishment of any such non-County owned facilities. There is a rational basis for such a distinction that does not rely on anti-federal immigration sentiment. Purportedly the facilities that the administration is attempting to build range in population up to a proposed 10,000 inmate capacity. Of course, with the detainees, employees will come, many with families; the resulting demands on County infrastructure and services --such as housing, schools, roads, water and sewer, and health services—will be staggering. The federal government holds exclusive authority over immigration, but local regulation that has an incidental effect is permissible, and more importantly, the anti-commandeering doctrine means that the federal government cannot commandeer the local resources necessary to provide all the supportive services. They cannot require us to build roads, hospitals, and schools.

The point of these examples is simply that we do not have to engage in frivolous or groundless legal arguments to engage in the fight. But we do need to fight. Bill 16-2026 is a great achievement. But it is not enough.

Remember, we started this discussion in 2017 around the Sanctuary Bill. Since then, we have been engaged in an inexorable march to the current circumstances. There was never really, truly, a respite. There was just a period when we allowed ourselves to be gulled by the belief that our institutions and democracy would thrive; self-correction was built into the system. Do not make the same mistake again. Do as much as you can. Be willing to fight whatever legal challenges a more aggressive bill might bring.

I appreciate that the speed of this process has not allowed time to flesh out some of these additional alternatives. And I also endorse the need to move forward expeditiously; I do not think our purposes are necessarily served by a hastily drafted amendment without time to strategize the most defensible bill. But if the Council decides to move forward quickly to enact the bill without amendments, it can certainly move forward with separate legislation for an expansion of the limitations I have discussed.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Margaret Ann Nolan

Good evening County Executive and Councilmembers,

My name is Muzna Ansari, I am the Director of the Howard County Muslim Alliance. We are a group dedicated to civically empowering American Muslims in this county. I want to start by thanking County Executive Calvin Ball for introducing CB16 and thanking Councilwoman Liz Walsh for introducing CB17. These bills are vital in the context of increased immigration enforcement we are witnessing daily across our nation.

I am here tonight to speak in support of both emergency acts, including as they relate to the American Muslim community.

As American Muslims, our community has experienced the direct harms of ICE since the days following September 11th, when ICE was created under the Department of Homeland Security. To this day, our community continues to be subjected to surveillance, profiling, and detention –without transparency, due process, or accountability. There are countless examples of federal agents spying on our mosques, to informants being placed on college campus Muslim Student Associations. Our community has been on the receiving end of being targeted, profiled, and deported-we know what each of those experiences is. And we do not want any other community to have to experience these harms.

What we are seeing unfold before our very eyes in recent days-ICE murdering citizens in broad daylight, ICE taking a 5 year old children into detention-this is the culmination of decades of an agency acting unchecked, an agency acting with no accountability, an agency acting with complete impunity. We should be VERY CLEAR EYED that we did not get to this point overnight, and we will not get out of the place we find ourselves in overnight either.

It is only through increased accountability and oversight that we can move away from ICE bringing its dangerous and harsh enforcement practices to our county. Today ICE is targeting undocumented immigrants but we should not be naive enough to believe that they will stop there. The federal administration has already released a presidential memorandum that they will target organizations with political views that differ from theirs. The administration has already arrested a Black journalist for recording ICE activities in Minnesota. There are already two citizens who have died because of ICE. The writing is on the wall-ICE will only continue to expand its operations, to harm not ONLY immigrant communities, but to harm us all.

If Howard County is in fact the progressive county we boast ourselves to be, we must behave as such. We must ensure that in our county, on our watch, not a single one of neighbors, friends, community members is arrested and taken to a detention facility,

regardless of their immigration status, their skin color, or their faith. We must ensure that our county does not contract with ICE to set up a detention center. We must ensure that county facilities do not become sites for enforcement action, by providing them with clear guidance. We must ensure that our local businesses know exactly how to protect themselves and their workers if ICE shows up at their doorsteps.

While we cannot control what the federal administration does, we can control how our county protects its own residents. These two bills before you tonight CB16 and CB17 are vital to protect not only our immigrant community members, but each of us in this room—ICE is beginning with undocumented immigrants, but they will not stop there. If we as a county take the right, bold steps of protecting our immigrant neighbors, these steps will ultimately protect each and every one of us.

I urge each of you to vote in favor of these emergency bills. As our elected leaders, we are counting on you to not only protect our immigrant community members, but to protect each and every Howard County resident.

Thank you for your leadership at this critical moment.

Testimony in SUPPORT of CB 16-2026 and CB 17-2026

Good evening Council Members,

My name is Nilda and I am a member of CASA. I am a U.S. citizen and a proud resident of Elkridge. I am the mother of two children, and every day I work hard to ensure their well-being and happiness. Even though I am a U.S. citizen, in this climate I only feel comfortable sharing my first name to protect my family.

Today, I express my full support for the prohibition of permitting for privately owned detention centers in Howard County. Companies should not be allowed to profit from the separation of our families and the violation of our rights. The County should not be in the business of collaborating, in any way, shape, or form, with Immigration and Customs Enforcement or Border Patrol.

Every day, my community lives in fear of being detained, beaten, and separated from their loved ones. I know firsthand that this fear makes our entire county less safe.

I am a strong woman and a survivor of domestic violence. When I was abused, I wanted to call the police to report the violence I was suffering. But I didn't because the abuser threatened to call immigration authorities to have me deported. Let us work together so that no one in our county ever has to face such a situation again.

Let's work together to ensure that our young people's lives are filled with opportunities for education and enjoyment—not with the fear of losing their freedom or their loved ones.

This week, my son told me that his best friend is terrified of her parents being deported. He said to me, with a very serious expression, "Mom, if they're deported, I'm gonna go with her." It breaks my heart that my son has to contemplate such a brave act at such a young age.

In the face of fear, my community is brave, and every day we show up for work, go to school, and continue contributing to this county that we love so much. Today, I'm grateful we have the support of our brave Council members who are promoting this emergency legislation. When these bills are passed into law, I will proudly tell my son and the young people in our community that their councilmembers are doing everything they can to protect our dignity, safety, and justice. Thank you.

Testimony for CB16 and CB17

Assalamu alaikum — peace be upon you — and good evening.

My name is Rasha El-Haggan. I am here representing Tarbiyah Academy, a K–8 Islamic International Baccalaureate school located four minutes from the proposed ICE detention facility.

I want to begin by thanking County Executive Calvin Ball for introducing CB16, and Councilwoman Liz Walsh for introducing CB17. Your leadership matters. These bills tell communities like ours that we are worth protecting.

I am here today in support of both CB16 and CB17, because together they protect the sense of safety every child needs to learn.

I have to admit that I hesitated to be here tonight. I worried about retaliation against my school. And I know I am not alone. There are community institutions not represented in this room today because of that same fear.

But my faith, and the way I was raised here in Howard County, do not allow me to give into fear by staying silent when our children are at risk.

I am a longtime resident of Howard County. I grew up here, got married here, and raised my children here. I work here and worship here. I am a proud graduate of Wilde Lake High School, and I trained as a teacher at Oakland Mills High School. This county raised me, educated me, and taught me what community looks like—and what education looks like.

Schools are meant to be spaces of safety and trust. That is not a slogan for us. It is the condition required for children to learn.

The placement of an ICE detention facility near a school is fundamentally incompatible with that mission.

Educators work every day to create environments where children feel secure enough to ask questions and to grow. Detention activity introduces fear and emotional stress that directly interferes with learning. Teachers and administrators are not trained—nor should they ever be expected—to manage the fallout of nearby detention operations.

At Tarbiyah Academy, we serve many students from immigrant and Muslim backgrounds. These children are already navigating a world where they feel watched, questioned, and misunderstood. Fear shows up as absenteeism. It shows up as silence. It shows up as children who are afraid to play outside.

Because of increased immigration enforcement activity and uncertainty around ICE behavior, we have been forced to take steps no school should have to take simply to function. Locating an ICE facility so close to our school would dramatically increase fear and risk for our students, families, and staff.

We are already being pushed to create emergency procedures no educational environment should have to consider. When ICE activity is nearby, our students must remain indoors. No recess. No outdoor learning. No fresh air.

With a detention facility four minutes away, ICE presence would be constant. That means keeping children inside regularly—out of fear of what we now know ICE does, not only to undocumented people, but to citizens as young as 5 years old.

This is unacceptable.

The outdoors matters. Play matters. Movement matters. You cannot educate children in a state of fear.

Teaching is already one of the hardest professions. Our teachers now carry an added burden—worrying not only about teaching well, but about protecting their students from the very forces meant to uphold public order.

And that fear does not stop at the school gate.

CB17 matters because when families trust that county spaces—like libraries, health clinics, recreation centers, and community buildings—are safe, their children show up ready to learn. Psychological safety does not end at the school door. CB17 helps ensure that fear does not follow our students, families, and teachers into the public spaces they rely on every day.

It also matters because clarity matters. We have had to clearly mark our own school as private property to protect our community. CB17 reinforces that same principle countywide: that when spaces are designated private, enforcement cannot happen without a judicial warrant. That clarity protects families, workers, and institutions alike.

Together, CB16 and CB 17 ensure Howard County is proactive—not reactive.

Please pass both bills (CB16 and CB17) and make it clear: Our schools are not zones of fear, rather they help educate the future of Howard County.

Thank you.



UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Congresswoman Sarah Elfreth
Testimony in Support of CB16-2026
February 4th, 2026

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify today. I'd like to start by thanking this Council for taking up and expediting this legislation, and to my partner, Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, for taking quick and decisive action to halt an ICE detention center here in Elkridge. But most importantly, I'd like to thank the neighbors and community members who showed up tonight to testify, share their perspectives, and lean into the democratic process. You give me hope, even on the darkest days in Washington.

I want to take a few moments to urge a favorable vote on CB16-2026 - Emergency Legislation - Amending - Howard County Building Code - I-3 Use group. As the Trump Administration continues to weaponize ICE and stoke fear in our communities, we have to be united at all levels of government to protect the safety and dignity of our neighbors.

When ICE sends under-trained agents - who spend roughly 1/3 the amount of time training than our own local law enforcement - into our communities with guns and masks and no respect for due process, the public trust is eroded. When two U.S. citizens, VA nurse Alex Pretti and mother and wife Renee Good, are brutally murdered at just 37-years-old - my same age - ICE is not making our communities any safer. When 2025 was the deadliest year on record for those who were detained in ICE facilities - 25 people died while in custody - and another 8 have died in January, 2026 alone, we cannot continue to fund this agency without real, meaningful reform. When people are afraid to go to work, send their kids to school, or peacefully protest because of actions taken by their own government, that is a fundamental failure.

This week in the House of Representatives, I voted no on funding ICE and DHS. I have called for a complete and thorough investigation of what happened in Minneapolis. And, I have signed onto articles of impeachment against Secretary Noem. Under Secretary Noem, DHS, and ICE have systemically violated the rights and privacy of Americans, terrorized our cities, and obstructed Congress.

And locally, we will make clear that an ICE detention facility is not welcome in Elkridge. It is not welcome in Howard County. And, it is not welcome anywhere in Maryland. I have been to the ICE Baltimore Field Office with the Maryland Congressional Delegation multiple times to conduct our oversight duties of the facility, and from what I have seen, I can tell you that we do not need that here in Howard County. We still have outstanding questions on the conditions and operating posture of that facility that have gone unanswered by ICE. My concerns about that facility were only heightened by the video that we all saw a few weeks ago that appeared to show horrific overcrowding and deeply troubling conditions.

Now, Mr. Chair, If I may take a moment to speak directly to my neighbors here in Howard County. I know we are living in dark and scary times. As this Administration targets folks based on the color of their skin, as this agency actively tramples on the due process and civil rights of neighbors, as they try to intimidate peaceful protesters, it is hard to keep the faith. These videos are gutwrenching. The headlines can leave us feeling hopeless. But, please continue to lean in and stay engaged.

What gives me hope are the people here in this room, the organizers in Minnesota, the faith leaders across the country who are peacefully protesting and braving the bitter cold to make clear that ICE has no place in their communities. Howard County, I know that we will continue to show our solidarity, show up, and speak up.

CONGRESSWOMAN SARAH ELFRETH

3RD DISTRICT, MARYLAND

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UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

I want everyone to know that my office in Columbia is ready to serve you. One of the ways we do that is by communicating with federal agencies on your behalf on everything from your VA benefits and IRS tax returns to ICE detention.

Mr. Chair, there hasn't been a week during my first year in Congress when I haven't received a frantic text message or Facebook tag from a constituent who has a family member or coworker picked up by ICE. And that's when my office can spring into action. I have come here today with privacy release forms. These forms allow us to communicate with DHS and ICE on your behalf or on behalf of a loved one. If you would like to have your information on file with just our office in the event that you or a loved one is impacted by the weaponization of ICE, please find a member of our team. These aren't easy times, but our office has always been here to serve you on your hardest days... and we will continue to do just that.

Finally, I want this Council to know that you are not the only local jurisdiction facing this problem: I spent an hour with colleagues in Congress who represent communities across the nation. All were at a loss as to what to do and how to encourage their local government partners to act. I'm more proud than I can express that you, that this Howard County government and Council are showing the nation how to lead.

Thank you again to County Executive Ball for his leadership, the Howard County Council for the opportunity to testify on this legislation and for taking such swift action, and to the neighbors who are participating in this important discussion.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah Elfreth".

Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress

Good evening, distinguished Council-members, and thank you for your time,

My name is Truth Thomas and I am the Inaugural Poet Laureate of Howard County, Maryland. Let me begin by saying I believe God will bring us through our current ICE-related woes. Divine love has always been the ultimate victor over evil. That said, history teaches us something difficult: evil endures. It has a sameness to it. In fact, it is centuries the same.

It is the same evil that just killed a Minneapolis mother and Veterans Administration nurse, calling Constitutional observers terrorists, that once bled Wounded Knee as if it were earning a homicidal merit badge. It is the same evil that would imprison a five-year-old, calling it child care, that once acquitted the men who murdered Emmett Till.

That same spirit now chases thirty pieces of silver in Howard County to erect a Trump prison camp—an ICE detention center, forged with bricks of cruelty and pasted with mortar of greed. The creation of any such facility would not only crucify our community's well-being, it would fossilize human rights themselves.

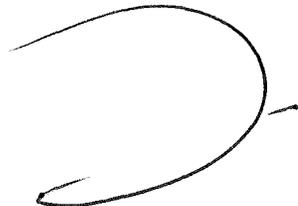
Behind its bars would be immigrants guilty of nothing more than wanting a better life for their families. Behind its bars would be people torn from their loved ones, echoing the horrors of forced family separations during slavery—or perhaps any citizen who dares speak up against it—or journalist who has the gumption to honestly report on it.

Ella Baker once said, “We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.” She meant that as a call to collective, everyday struggle—a belief that real change comes from ordinary people organizing together and refusing to accept injustice as “just the way things are.”

Tonight, with a kindred resolve, I am here to advocate for the civil and human rights of everybody in our beloved county. That is why I profoundly support CB16-2026 and CB17-2026.

Yes—ICE out of Howard County.
and
Yes—ICE out of existence.

Thank you very much.





Testimony on: CB16-2026 – Emergency Act – Amending – Howard County Building Code – I-3 Use Group

To: Howard County Council

Organization: Indivisible Howard County (IndivisibleHoCoMD)

Submitting: Vanessa Deutschmann

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 4, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Jones, and Members of the Council:

My name is Vanessa Deutschmann, and I am long time resident of Howard County and a member of the leadership team for IndivisibleHoCoMD. I am pleased to speak this evening on behalf of our 1,700 members who reside in districts across the county. I am here to offer favorable testimony in support of **CB16 – Emergency Act – Amending – Howard County Building Code – I3 Use Group**

First I want to acknowledge the decisive action taken by County Executive Calvin Ball and the four co-sponsoring members of this Council in response to the imminent opening of a private ICE detention facility in the middle of a peaceful, diverse, thriving community neighborhood. The aggressive and often violent overreach of federal authorities and their policies currently being waged against our immigrant neighbors is observable, inhumane, completely unwarranted, and must be addressed with urgency. Thank you for taking emergency action and for providing this opportunity for community input.

IndivisibleHoCoMD was started in 2017 in response to a national call to action that has become the national Indivisible movement. We are one of more than 2,500 groups that have been formed in 99% of the congressional districts across the United States, and our local chapter has more than 1,700 members. In Maryland alone, there are 49 active Indivisible groups focused on defending our democracy. We are all volunteers working many hours to stand up against authoritarianism and to contribute to safe, equitable, healthy, and welcoming communities for ALL people in Howard County and in Maryland.

CB16 will provide one important protection against expansion of aggressive tactics employed by DHS that target immigrant and foreign-born residents. We know that individuals are being arrested without proper warrants, without evidence of criminal offenses, and without due process. Additional detention capacity, especially where there is private profit motive, further exacerbates this system of injustice. Where ICE has more capacity to grab and warehouse people to meet their reprehensible quotas – we can expect that this is exactly what they will do.

At IndivisibleHoCoMD we say “no” to private development or ownership of detention facilities for the following reasons:

- Private ownership of detainment facilities represents an inherent conflict between corporate profit motives and the ethical, humane treatment of detainees.
- Private entities are known to prioritize shareholder returns over safety, leading to a system that incentivizes higher incarceration rates and substandard living conditions. It is not difficult to comprehend that when one is in the business of detaining human beings, your levers to maximize

profit essentially boil down to the imprisonment of more people, at lower costs per person. This leads to inadequate medical and mental health care, poor food quality, and insufficient staffing.

- Studies have found that private facilities often experience significantly more assaults than municipally run counterparts*.
- Reports have also highlighted that private facilities operate with less government or public oversight, allowing violations of detainee safety and labor rules to go unchecked.
- The power to deprive an individual of their liberty is an extraordinary power that must be handled with public trust and squarely in the public interest. This cannot ethically be delegated to a private, for-profit party.

We recognize that restriction on the development of private detention facilities is only one in an arsenal of tools that are necessary at the County level to sufficiently protect members of our community – especially those most targeted by racist and xenophobic policies. We encourage all members of County leadership to wield your power with the clarity, courage, and urgency required in this moment.

On the specific matter of **CB16-2026**, IndivisibleHoCoMD urges the County Council to **favorable vote**.

*<https://www.aclu.org/news/prisoners-rights/end-prisons-profit>