

Expedited Bill 13-26 – Building Permit – Immigration Detention Facility (Ice Out Act)
Economics Committee

March 20, 2026

Position: Favorable

Dear Councilmember Glass, Council President Fani-Gonzalez, Councilmembers Stewart, Friedson, Katz, Evans, Jawando, Mink, Sayles, and Council Vice President Balcombe:

My name is Kendra Westervelt and I am a resident of Clarksburg, MD. I strongly urge the committee to pass Expedited Bill 13-26, Building Permits – Immigration Detention Facility (Ice Out Act).

Expedited Bill 13-26 will prohibit the issuance of building permits or use-and-occupancy permits for immigration detention facilities.

- Recently, the Maryland Attorney General sued the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for its attempts to purchase a warehouse in Hagerstown, MD to allegedly be used as a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center. And Howard County recently revoked a building permit for a privately-owned detention facility in Elkridge, MD for failing to meet certain notice and public hearing requirements. The Montgomery County Code does not currently define an immigration detention center or facility.
- Expedited Bill 13-26 defines an “immigration detention facility” as “any building, facility, or structure used, in whole or in part, to house or detain individuals for civil immigration violations”, a definition modeled after the definition in State law (Correctional Services Article § 1-101).
- Expedited Bill 13-26 would prohibit the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) from issuing a building permit or a use-and-occupancy permit for a privately-owned immigration detention facility. The intent of this bill is to prevent the use of both new buildings and existing buildings as privately-owned immigration detention facilities.

I support this bill because loopholes in current Maryland law allow municipalities to approve new detention centers without the proper zoning requirements. As a result, municipalities such as Washington County have sanctioned the use of warehouses constructed to handle commodities to detain human beings, without regard to whether there is sufficient infrastructure to safely and humanely do so.

Given the human rights abuses documented at the Fallon Center in Baltimore, where a hundred or more immigrants are crammed into tight spaces with no access to clean water or sanitary facilities, and reports that DHS’s plans to use a Washington County warehouse as a detention camp are moving forward despite a lack of transparency and community input, there is a clear need to develop laws that will require municipalities to conduct greater oversight on immigration detention facilities in our state.

As a resident of Maryland, I think it is important to understand all the dangers and problems associated with these rushed purchases and makeshift facilities and to recognize that

facilities that housed goods or services at one time are not set up to house humans. We say we are a civilized country, and we need to start acting like it.

Maryland has an obligation to implement laws that protect the health and safety of all human beings, especially those who are detained or incarcerated. For the reasons stated in this testimony, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Expedited Bill 13-26

Thank you,
Kendra Westervelt