

April 7, 2025

House Committee on Judiciary
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support of House Bill No. 5724: STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- DETENTION FOR
FEDERAL CIVIL IMMIGRATION VIOLATIONS

Dear Representative,

I am writing as a community member and Rhode Island resident in support of House Bill No. 5724:
STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- DETENTION FOR FEDERAL CIVIL IMMIGRATION
VIOLATIONS.

States across the country have passed legislation banning municipalities from using their prisons as ICE detention centers. With the passage of this legislation, Rhode Island can join other states in creating a community free of exploitative and inhumane immigration detention practices. No city should rely on prisons and detention centers as a form of economic development.

Immigration detention is the unjust and inhumane practice of incarcerating immigrants while they await a determination of their immigration status or potential deportation. Immigrants in detention can be undocumented or documented immigrants, including people whose immigration status is not current, is expired, or is under review.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, the United States government detained nearly 250,000 people in a sprawling system of approximately 200 jails across the country run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). These people include survivors of torture, people seeking asylum, visa holders, people who have been granted the permanent right to live in the U.S., people who have lived here for years and may have American citizen spouses and children, individuals with mental health and medical conditions and other vulnerable groups including pregnant women and families with children – even babies.

ICE has an appalling record of abuse. Many Americans are shocked to learn that in ICE detention centers people are deprived of their liberty, denied access to lawyers, separated from their families and loved ones, and subjected to severe medical neglect. These abuses are exacerbated by ICE's refusal to release people from detention during the COVID-19 pandemic, threatening the lives of those detained. Since 2003 over 200 people have died in ICE custody, including 21 deaths in FY 2020, ICE's highest death toll in 15 years.

The Wyatt Detention Center in Central Falls is not an exception to this abusive system. The Wyatt has a gross history of medical neglect, unsanitary conditions, abusive and punitive treatment towards detainees, and the restriction of communications which is a fundamental and constitutional right for detained individuals.

The Wyatt is a financial burden to the City of Central Falls. Tax dollars and government contracts should not be used towards the torture, neglect, and detainment of people, or towards the perverse consolidation of wealth for private prison companies. Our tax dollars should be used towards education, health care, community infrastructure, and other services that support the public good.

Sincerely,

Addy Schuetz