

Roberta DiMezza

From: Aurora Mejia <2026amejia.schoolone@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 10, 2025 12:00 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Please pass HB-5724

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April 9, 2025
82 Smith St
Providence, RI, 02903

Dear House Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Aurora Mejia, I reside in Representative District 63 in East Providence, Rhode Island. I am writing to express my support in regards to HB-5724, which would prohibit the use of our state's facilities and resources in carrying out the unjust, inhumane, and unlawful detention of undocumented immigrants. The methods that the current federal administration is using to enforce immigration laws are unconstitutional and violate basic human rights.

Rhode Island is host to the sole major immigrant detention center in New England, the Wyatt Detention Center which is located in Central Falls. Detainees are held at this facility in the custody of the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, where they are often not given due process, and their constitutional rights to legal representation and a fair trial are violated. As the daughter of two Ecuadorian immigrants, this issue carries great personal significance as I witness how others like me are being treated at the hands of the federal government. In the two months since the second Trump administration rose to power, the safety of undocumented and more alarmingly legal residents has become uncertain. The recent high-profile illegal detentions and deportations of legal permanent residents, like the numerous cases of students expressing their dissent towards the current administration, or the deportation of our state's very own Dr. Rasha Alawieh which was carried out in direct violation of a judge's order are clear signs that we should stop taking part in these blatant human rights violations. This facility, which is mainly used for that purpose, represents everything that this state has previously committed itself to fighting against, and its closure is necessary to show the rest of New England that we are standing our ground against Trump's injustices.

More concerningly, there have been many reports from detainees that show a consistent pattern of racist abuse and neglect within the facility. Inmates are reportedly kept in unsanitary conditions and are ignored when experiencing medical emergencies. The staff at Wyatt apparently do not respond to requests for medical treatment, which led to the death of an inmate in 2008. Inmates are charged at exorbitant rates for basic needs, like communication with their families and legal counsel, which costs nearly three times more per minute than what is allowed. Inmates are underfed, and those with dietary restrictions are reportedly not fed at all. As a result, inmates are forced to pay inflated prices for food from the commissary in order to survive. This is the exact definition of extortion, which is illegal and should not be allowed to occur in a government-operated facility. The company which processes these payments, called TouchPay, takes a significant cut from money transfers between detainees and their families in order to profit from their suffering. These examples show a clear focus on greed and profit over the wellbeing of detainees, and the corporation which runs the facility reportedly makes four million dollars per month. They have not paid a cent back to the community in which they operate in four years.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am hopeful that this committee will make the right decision to ensure the safety of all Rhode Islanders.

Sincerely,

Aurora Mejia

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Representative District 63