

Bill H-5724 (Viewpoint: For)
Catherine O'Connor

I feel compelled to write this testimony in support of HB5724 for many reasons, but one that I find especially important to discuss is Wyatt's history of medical neglect. In 2008, Wyatt staff claimed that Hiu Lui ("Jason") Ng was pretending to be in extreme pain for months until he was diagnosed with liver cancer and a broken spine. He died less than a week after finally receiving the diagnosis. Wyatt's treatment of Ng was cruel, and the facility has continued to prioritize profit over the safety and dignity of the people detained there. During the pandemic, Wyatt punished 60 people detained there for a hunger strike in which they advocated for safer conditions and release. It took ACLU lawsuits for medically vulnerable immigrants to be released. Lawsuits should not be necessary to protect the lives of people detained at Wyatt. In June of 2020, Judge McElroy denounced the unsanitary conditions at Wyatt and Wyatt's failure to learn the underlying medical conditions of the people detained there. In 2024, the number of medical staff at Wyatt decreased while the number of people detained there doubled. I cannot separate my knowledge of Wyatt's history of medical neglect from the fact that Wyatt was built to profit off of the detainment of human beings. Simply put, Wyatt is an institution that sees taking people from their families and communities as an economic opportunity. It sickens me to think that my tax dollars are supporting the dehumanizing treatment of people detained at Wyatt, when in reality people should be able to navigate their immigration cases within their communities.