

## **Written Testimony in Support of Bill HB-5724**

Leonardo Arriola Carnicelli

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Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Leonardo Arriola Carnicelli, and I am writing to urge you to support Bill HB-5724. My journey in this country has been shaped by years of fear and uncertainty due to my immigration status—an experience that too many in our community continue to endure.

For seven years, I lived as an undocumented immigrant due to circumstances beyond my control. I came to the United States as a teenager when my mother married a U.S. citizen, trusting that he would help us obtain legal status. Instead, he neglected and lied about filing our paperwork for five years before ultimately kicking us out of our home. We were left in limbo, vulnerable and without legal protections. Thankfully, we were able to obtain residency through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), but that process took two years—two years of living in constant fear of being detained by ICE, two years of uncertainty about my future.

Even now, as a green card holder, that fear has not disappeared. Under the current administration, immigrants are not only being detained for their undocumented status, but even those with legal status—VISA holders, permanent residents like myself—are at risk of detention for speaking out against injustices, such as the atrocities committed against the Palestinian people. This is not the future I hoped for when I finally obtained legal status, and it is certainly not the future I want for the people in my community.

Through my work, I provide nutrition education to families, helping them build healthier futures for their children. I meet people in food pantries who are eager for the opportunity to support their families despite the crushing cost of food and rent. I see individuals who want to work, contribute, and thrive, yet our broken system continues to fail them simply because of how they entered this country. These are not outsiders—they are members of our communities, and they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

ICE, however, does the opposite. It tears families apart. It detains people at facilities like Wyatt, where reports of mistreatment and neglect are rampant. No human being should be subjected to these conditions, and no community should be complicit in such cruelty. Our local police departments are meant to protect us, not collaborate with ICE in detaining and deporting our neighbors.

If we are not going to provide undocumented community members with work permits, legal pathways, or even basic state-funded assistance to support their families, then the least we can do is stop terrorizing them. Stop separating them from their loved ones. Stop allowing ICE to operate in our communities.

I urge you to support Bill HB-5724 and take a stand against the criminalization of immigrants. Our communities deserve better.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Leonardo Arriola Carnicelli

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