



April 9th, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

Greetings, I am Vanessa Flores-Maldonado, Executive Director of the Providence Youth Student Movement (PrYSM). We are a community-based organization whose mission is to mobilize youth of color and Southeast Asian refugees to build grassroots power and organize collectively for social justice. For over 20 years, PrYSM has worked to uplift the voices and power of those directly impacted as we build strong, healthy communities free from state, street, and interpersonal violence.

I am writing today on behalf of PrYSM to advocate for the passage of HB-5724. As a youth organization, we are too familiar with how generational trauma, poverty, lack of resources, and inadequate education can become entry points for young people into the criminal justice system, also known as the school to prison to deportation pipeline. Too often we see our tax dollars be invested in false solutions that do not actually keep our communities safe, such as prisons and detention centers, instead of being invested in schools, housing, healthcare, and more. As an organization that has supported numerous community members formerly and currently detained at the Wyatt Detention Center in Central Falls, we have heard firsthand the medical neglect, unsanitary conditions, and overall dehumanization that happens at the Wyatt. Our communities are not safer when corporations can open up factories of neglect and abuse, like the Wyatt, for economic gains. We deserve better.

Considering the rise of racism, facism, and xenophobia, it is important now more than ever for Rhode Island to take a stand against inhumane practices that threaten our communities. States across the country have passed legislation banning municipalities from using their prisons as ICE detention centers so we know it is possible. PrYSM fights to defend, support, and celebrate our communities and we hope you can join us in this fight by passing HB-5724.

Sincerely,

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