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From: Juanita Montes de Oca <juanita.montesdeoca@gmail.com>
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To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Support for HB 7198: Protecting our neighbors and families

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Dear Members of the Committee,

As a resident of Rhode Island, I am writing to strongly urge your support for House Bill 7198. This bill is a common-sense solution to a technicality in federal law that causes disproportionate harm to our immigrant neighbors.

Currently, a misdemeanor sentence of exactly one year, even with suspended jail time, can trigger mandatory deportation. This means that for a minor offense, a person who has lived, worked, and paid taxes in our state could be permanently separated from their family. **By simply changing the maximum sentence to 364 days**, we can ensure that our local justice system remains in the hands of Rhode Island judges, rather than being outsourced to federal immigration enforcement.

This change doesn't take away a judge's power to punish; it just ensures the punishment fits the crime. We should join states like New York and Washington in protecting our most vulnerable residents, including asylum seekers and victims of domestic violence.

Please vote **YES** on HB 7198 to keep Rhode Island families together.

Respectfully,
Juanita