

March 4th, 2026

House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Testimony in Support of HB-7198

My name is Sophia de los Reyes. I am in favor of Representative Felix's bill HB-7198 to change the definition of felony and misdemeanor in Rhode Island's criminal laws. This legislation would change the maximum prison sentence for a misdemeanor from 365 days to 364 days. Under immigration law, minor offenses leading to a sentence of a year or more could mean detention, deportation, and/or a loss of social benefits and passing this bill could mean protection for hundreds of Rhode Island residents.

I believe that people should not be caged or deported, and we should instead advocate for rehabilitation, healing, and opportunities for citizenship. A small offense like shoplifting should not result in a complete uproot of the life an individual has built here, including their family or their job because they also happen to be subject to immigration laws. We can change these definitions to protect our neighbors from the overlapping, unforgiving, harsh immigration policies.

As an organizer, I've seen the pain and suffering of being separated from family members, or being worried about spouses and children left behind. We should not allow technical definitions in RI criminal laws to aid the separation of families- that should not be the response for something like minor shoplifting. RI has a responsibility to counter unjust policies.

I envision a future without the overcriminalization of immigrants and keeping families together. Please consider these points in favor of Representative Felix's bill HB-7198 that would redefine the definition of felony and misdemeanor in RI laws.

Sincerely,

Sophia de los Reyes
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