

To the House Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing in support of House Bill 7436. This act would prohibit any state or municipal government official or agency from entering into any contract to detain individuals for civil immigration violations, and if any such contract is in existence, the contract must be terminated by July 1, 2026. It would further prohibit the use of any public resources to detain individuals for federal civil immigration violations.

The Wyatt Detention Center detains immigrants through its Intergovernmental Service Agreement (IGSA) with ICE. By prohibiting IGSA contracts (that allow ICE to use state and local resources for detention) this bill would effectively eliminate immigration detention in the state of Rhode Island.

This legislation would prevent private companies like GeoGroup and CoreCivic from stepping in to open up private detention facilities. Detention centers run by corporations and investors prioritize their profits and keeping beds filled over the humanity and rights of the people it keeps detained. This legislation would prevent Rhode Island from being a place where companies can open up factories of neglect and abuse. On April 4th, 2020, 60 people detained by ICE at the Wyatt launched a hunger strike to demand safer conditions and their release amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Wyatt staff responded by retaliating against the hunger strikers by cutting off phone access and placing people in isolation. The Wyatt has a long history of neglect.

States across the country have passed legislation banning private prisons and detention centers. With the passage of this legislation Rhode Island can join other states in creating a community free of exploitative and inhumane immigration detention practices.

Thank you.

-Alex Denisevich