



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H-7436
RELATING DETENTION FOR FEDERAL CIVIL IMMIGRATION VIOLATIONS**

Memo To: House Judiciary Committee

From: Angela Lima, Chief of Government Relations, Women's Fund of Rhode Island

Date: March 2, 2026

Chair and Members of the Committee:

We at the Women's Fund of RI offer this testimony from a gender equity perspective in support of the state not renewing contracts, agreements, or funding arrangements connected to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the federal penitentiary system.

From a gender equity lens, public spending is never neutral. Every dollar reflects whose safety, dignity, and well-being we prioritize. When Rhode Island directs resources toward immigration detention or federal incarceration systems, it diverts funds away from services that women, children, and families rely on to survive and thrive.

Across the country, policies carried out by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement have had profound impacts on women and families. Women in immigrant households—particularly Latina, Black, African, Caribbean, and Southeast Asian women—often serve as primary caregivers and economic anchors. When a family member is detained or deported, women are left to manage sudden income loss, childcare disruptions, housing instability, and trauma. This instability pushes families into poverty and increases reliance on emergency state services.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility, funded overwhelmingly by the federal government. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement operates with a multi-billion-dollar annual federal budget appropriated by Congress. Rhode Island taxpayers should not be asked to supplement or subsidize federal enforcement priorities—especially when our state faces its own fiscal constraints and pressing local needs.

Similarly, the federal prison system, overseen by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, is federally funded and federally administered. Continuing state contracts or financial entanglements with federal incarceration infrastructure effectively shifts limited state resources toward a federal system that already commands significant national funding.

From a gender equity standpoint, this matters deeply. Women—especially women of color and immigrant women—are disproportionately harmed when families are destabilized through detention or incarceration. They absorb the caregiving burdens, face economic insecurity, and experience heightened stress and trauma. Meanwhile, our state budget has urgent priorities: childcare, Medicaid stability, housing affordability, food

security, and support for survivors of domestic violence.

At a time when Rhode Island faces budget pressures and potential federal funding losses in healthcare and nutrition programs, it is fiscally responsible to focus state dollars on strengthening communities—not reinforcing federally funded enforcement systems.

Choosing not to renew contracts related to ICE or federal penitentiary funding is both a values-based and economically sound decision. The federal government already allocates substantial resources to immigration enforcement and incarceration. Rhode Island does not need to provide additional investment. Instead, we can redirect our limited state funds toward policies that promote family stability, workforce participation, and gender equity.

A gender-equitable budget prioritizes care over punishment, stability over separation, and opportunity over incarceration. I urge you to decline renewal of these contracts and invest instead in programs that truly strengthen Rhode Island's women, children, and families.

Thank you for your consideration.

The mission of the Women's Fund of Rhode Island is to invest in women and girls through advocacy, research, and strategic partnership designed to achieve gender equity through systemic change. Our [Women's Well-Being Index](#) compares how well women fare against men on topics related to health, safety, economic security, education and civic participation in every RI city/town. Our [policy briefs](#) are written in response to the data found on the Index. You can find more about our work at www.wfri.org.

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