

To: House Committee on Judiciary
From: Geena Pham
Date: March 4, 2026
Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 7436

To the Honorable Chairperson and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Geena Pham, and I am a high school teacher living in Cranston, Rhode Island. I am writing to strongly urge the passage of House Bill 7436. This legislation is vital because it prohibits the state or any municipality from entering into contracts to detain individuals for civil immigration violations. Furthermore, it requires any such existing contracts to end by July 1, 2026, and prevents public resources from being used for these detentions.

In my classroom, I see the human cost of these policies every single day. My students are bright, capable young people, but many of them live in constant fear because their parents or guardians have been caught in the net of ICE detention and deportation. When a student's parent is detained, the impact is immediate and devastating: grades slip, mental health declines, and families are stripped of their stability. We are asking these children to focus on their futures while the current system provides the infrastructure to kidnap our neighbors.

The Wyatt Detention Center, currently the only facility in RI with an ICE contract, has a track record that should be unacceptable to all Rhode Islanders:

- In 2025, detainees reported being denied critical medications for life-threatening conditions like brain cancer and sickle cell anemia.
- There have been reports of dirty water causing nausea and diarrhea, sexual assault allegations, and racist or anti-immigrant ridicule from prison administrators.
- The facility charges \$0.25 per text and \$2.00 for a bottle of water, effectively leeching money from already struggling immigrant families.
- The Wyatt is a financial burden on Central Falls because it does not pay property taxes that would otherwise fund essential city services.

Rhode Island has the chance to join states like Illinois, Colorado, and Minnesota by ending these exploitative practices. People navigating their immigration cases should be able to do so in their communities and with their families, not behind bars.

I ask you to support HB 7436 to protect our students, our families, and our collective values.

Sincerely,
Geena Pham
Cranston, RI