

Chair Carol H. McEntee  
House Finance Committee  
Rhode Island State House

March 4, 2026



**RE: Testimony in support of House Bill 7436, Detention for Federal Civil Immigration Violations**

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the Committee:

Our testimony today is in strong support for H7436, a bill that would **prohibit state and municipal officials or bodies from entering into or renewing agreements that are used to detain individuals for federal civil immigration violations.**

For 50 years, Sojourner House, a non-profit based in Providence but now providing services across the state, has served thousands of victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking. We offer wraparound services such as support groups, emergency shelter, transitional and permanent supportive housing, sexual health advocacy, and emotional support. We believe that everyone deserves a safe, healthy home, and proudly house all genders.

Although this bill addresses immigration detention policy, it has important secondary relevance to domestic violence survivors and community safety. Domestic violence survivors, especially those who are immigrants or from mixed-status families, often must decide whether to call police during or after abuse. Allowing cooperation between the state and federal immigration enforcement programs creates a chilling effect where **survivors may be hesitant, or even afraid, to report abuse, seek protective orders, or access other critical legal remedies if they fear that any interaction with law enforcement could lead to detention, deportation, or separation from their family.**<sup>i</sup> This fear is rooted in lived experiences of survivors that have experienced or witnessed immigration consequences tied to reporting crimes.<sup>ii</sup> As a result, **abuse goes unreported, leaving survivors without protection and enabling perpetrators to continue harmful behavior unchecked.**

By prohibiting agreements that enable state or local facilities to be used for federal immigration detention, H7436 can help reduce some of the fear that immigrants and their families associate with engaging the justice system. By limiting the use of state or local facilities to detain individuals for federal immigration violations, this bill helps clarify that the focus of police and justice system engagement is on public safety and survivor protection, not immigration enforcement. **In pursuit of safer, more accessible supports for all survivors, we respectfully urge this Committee to support H7436.**

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<sup>i</sup> Dhingra, R., Kilborn, M., & Woldemikael, O. (2022). Immigration policies and access to the justice system: The effect of enforcement escalations on undocumented immigrants and their communities. *Political Behavior*, 44, 1359-1387. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09663-w>

<sup>ii</sup> Alliance for Immigrant Survivors (2025). Fear and silence: 2025 insights from advocates for immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. <https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/fear-and-silence-report>