

FROM: Nika Ficano, Providence, RI
RE: Support for H7436

3/4/2026

Hello,

My name is Nika Ficano and I am here today to voice my support for Representative Giraldo's bill H-7436 that would render it illegal for municipalities to maintain or enter into contracts with immigration detention centers or to lease public land for detention for immigration violations.

I support this legislation because RI's quasi-public Detention Facility that contracts with ICE, the Wyatt, has been incredibly harmful to those detained, their loved ones, and our communities as a whole, and a failure in every respect. The inhumane conditions that other people have also testified to, are not unique to the Wyatt, and federal Detention Centers for Immigration violations have no place in our state.

I support this legislation both as someone who has relationships with immigrants (as we all do) and as a volunteer who works with AMOR to support individuals who have been detained. In my capacity as a volunteer, I regularly communicate with individuals who need support, both those detained and their loved ones. It is devastating to witness the unnecessary and harmful situations they have been thrown into by ICE. People contact me seeking funds so that they can communicate with their loved ones and let them know where they are. Phone calls and even text messages cost them money. Families of those detained have contacted me seeking support with gas and electric bills, rent and food because an entire income stream has been taken from their family with no warning, no support, and for no reason. Many of these families have children, and their lives are thrown into material strain on top of the unimaginable emotional strain of having their loved one taken from them without reason, due process, or any clarity on the future. We are contacted to help people get into contact with legal resources, and to help pay for them. We try to help as much as we can, but these needs often exceed our capacity and it is heart wrenching that these needs, created unnecessarily by ICE intervention, are so great.

The very existence of this facility (and any facility contracted with ICE) serves to create avoidable suffering and chaos by detaining individuals unnecessarily, the vast majority of whom have no criminal convictions. On top of detaining individuals unnecessarily, on top of failing to provide humane conditions for those detained, it has been my experience that ICE takes every effort to make it difficult for their loved ones and for organizations like ours to support them or for them

to support themselves as well. Detainees are transferred between facilities constantly and with no warning, so we often lose contact with those we are supporting and they end up in places where they have no connection to family. This makes accessing legal resources and tracking cases very difficult. Phone numbers that have been given to detainees by the Wyatt about legal resources have proven to be useless – one person reported calling hundreds of times to no success. Again, these calls cost detainees money.

The process by which money can be sent to detainees is complicated and intentionally difficult. Online payments incur steep fees and there are limits on how many payments can be made per month. A portion of the fees and the limit on payments can be avoided by making cash payments in person through a kiosk, but this kiosk is often out of order and often is only repaired if people from our team circumvent the Detention facility and report the issue to kiosk machine company.

Individuals have had their personal possessions stolen by ICE detention facilities. On multiple occasions, people have been transferred or deported without their property. That means they have arrived in a new country, often a country they have no connection to, without identification documents, credit cards, phones, and other things that were in their possession when detained.

These deficiencies have been communicated to me personally, and are corroborated in Freedom of Information Act requests that AMOR has made in the past about conditions in the Wyatt. This is the tip of the iceberg, and all of it is avoidable by choosing not to allow our state to contract with ICE, as at least eight other states have already done.

I hope you consider supporting this crucial bill to end use of public land in these extractive contracts that have taken so much from the individuals who have been detained and our community as a whole.

Thank you for your time,

Nika Ficano

Providence, RI