

March 4th, 2026

House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Testimony in Support of HB-7436

My name is Sophia de los Reyes. I am giving testimony on behalf of the AMOR Network in support of Representative Giraldo's bill HB-7436 that would prohibit municipalities from contracting with ICE and withdraw the use of state property for immigration detention.

The bill would require the Wyatt Detention Center to end its contract with ICE, which benefits the entire community. AMOR advocates for a community without the criminalization of immigrants and inhumane detention practices.

This legislation is modeled off of laws implemented in other states, and this year we aren't alone as New England states propose bills to close detention centers in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and New York.

The Wyatt Detention Center is a financial failure to the city. In 1991, the nonprofit Central Falls Detention Facility Corporation (CFDFC) was created to pursue economic development for the city of Central Falls through the ownership of the Wyatt. For nearly two decades the Wyatt has failed to perform its founding purpose: to be a consistent source of income for the city of Central Falls. In fact, the city loses out on property taxes and opportunities it could gain if a business or school replaced the Wyatt.

When bondholders sued the Board and CF city government for trying to close down the second ICE contract in 2019, they also barred them from critiquing the Wyatt publicly. **Because of the lawsuit, the Wyatt is only accountable to its bondholder, whose sole interest is maintaining the Wyatt open and filling beds, not the living conditions there. This is why no city should rely on detention centers as a form of economic development.**

The Wyatt also has a gross history of medical neglect and today it is an ongoing, urgent issue.

In 2008 Hiu Lui "Jason" Ng, a migrant getting his green card died of liver cancer due to medical neglect and cruelty from Wyatt staff.

In 2020, Wyatt staff retaliated against a hunger strike.

To date the AMOR Network receives requests from detainees for support accessing basic needs, like medical attention, special diets, and purified water. The Wyatt continues to demonstrate its inability to provide adequate and timely health care for its detainees. **Even if the conditions inside were perfect, immigrants should be able to await their court decisions from the safety of their home without surveillance, not in prison.**

ICE detention conflicts with the values of a majority Hispanic or Latino community, a community that is also 40% foreign born. Central Falls is a community shaped by immigrants who are building their lives here in RI. A 2019 poll showed 98.4% disapproval of the Wyatt.

In the past year, we watched our neighbors taken from the streets, separated from their families and subject to the Wyatt's inhumane practices. We don't want ICE on our streets, in our schools, churches, courthouses, or detention centers.

We urge you to consider these points in support of Representative Giraldo's legislation HB-7436 that would prohibit municipalities from maintaining contracts with ICE and withdraw the use of state property for immigration detention.

Sincerely,

Sophia de los Reyes
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