

RHODE ISLAND HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

4/9/26

Re: Testimony in Support of House bill HB-8328

Dear Chairwoman and members of the Judicial Committee:

Thank you for your time and attention.

I'm submitting this testimony to urge you to vote in favor of House Bill 8328, to provide Rhode Islanders with virtual court options. I'd also like to urge everyone reading or listening to this testimony, including elected officials, to take a second action, and consider joining the ICE alert channel on WhatsApp at 401-675-1414.

I joined the AMOR network and the alert channel a little over a year ago, after learning of an undocumented person who was vindicated in a domestic violence case-of which she was the victim-before being kidnapped by ICE outside the court. I was and am sickened at the violent re-traumatizing of this person in which the state and federal government all played a part. Around 9 in the morning, the day after joining, I saw the alert and since I work from home, put my job on hold for the morning and headed to the Garrahy courthouse. I then started to circle the block.

Since that morning I have circled the courthouse probably hundreds of times, on foot and in a vehicle. I have been up and down every floor of the parking garage looking at cars very slowly. I'd be worried about being a 'lone creepy guy' if not for the hundreds of other volunteers who have been doing the same thing, day in and day out, for over a year outside Rhode Island courthouses. At a certain point, I realized I was 'walking a beat', to protect my neighbors. I realized we were doing what police should be doing. All of this was before ICE agents murdered two people who look like me, and were doing the same thing in Minneapolis.

If you join the ICE Alert Channel you will get these alerts throughout your day, and whether or not you can respond you will see exactly how often our immigrant communities are having to shelter and protect each other, and how often they are being violated aby an unjust process. You will know that ICE was outside the Cranston Municipal Courthouse Tuesday at 12:20pm. Prior to that they were outside the Superior Courthouse on March 27th at 9am. Endangering all of us. In November they mistakenly detained a judicial intern. This is not justice. This is chaos.

In January, masked ICE Agents at the Garrahy courthouse breached court security without checking their weapons, sending citizens scrambling, while screaming and barreling through the courthouse. We have all the reporting to know that these agents are being trained to violate the constitution, in a mismanaged agency whose historic crimes are still being uncovered.

I am speaking from my experience with the alert channel when I say ICE agents love courthouses. They know their targets will have to walk through metal detectors, and are compelled to be at a specific time and place. By forcing citizens to arrive in person, we are complicit in any violence these agents commit on state property.

Also in support of this bill, is the fact that virtual courts are good law and public management. We have the infrastructure in place since COVID, and it will be a relief to Rhode Islanders who have difficulty with transportation and accesibility. Seeking justice in unjust times requires us to adapt.

Myself and the over four thousand Rhode Islanders on these new WhatsApp channels will be watching the progress of all these bills involving ICE in Rhode Island in this session and going forward. Thank you for your work.

Sincerely,

**Bernard Dolan
House District 4**