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Dear members of the Rhode Island General Assembly,

My name is Emma Kahn, and I submit this testimony in **strong support of H-8347**, which would prohibit Rhode Island state and local law enforcement from voluntarily cooperating with federal civil immigration enforcement activities.

Effective local policing depends, above all else, on trust. When residents believe that any interaction with police — whether as a crime victim, a witness, or someone seeking help — may result in their detention and deportation, they withdraw from that relationship entirely. **This withdrawal does not make communities safer. It makes them considerably less safe.** When local police are perceived as operating in partnership with federal immigration enforcement — particularly in communities that have experienced aggressive civil enforcement activity — the legitimacy of those agencies in the eyes of the public they serve is diminished.

Rhode Island law enforcement agencies have built, over many years, relationships with immigrant communities. **H-8347 protects those relationships** by drawing a clear and defensible line: local police are accountable to Rhode Island residents, and their resources — funded by Rhode Island taxpayers — are directed toward Rhode Island public safety priorities, not federal civil enforcement functions.

The bill's core provisions are targeted and reasonable. It **does not prevent local law enforcement from cooperating with federal authorities in criminal matters**, including those involving serious or violent offenses. **What it prohibits is the voluntary entanglement of local agencies in civil immigration enforcement:** the honoring of administrative detainers without judicial warrants, the sharing of non-public release information with federal agents, and the deputization of local officers as immigration agents through formal agreements.

By requiring a judicial warrant before local agencies may honor a detainer or disclose non-public release information, the bill **aligns Rhode Island policy with both constitutional standards.** This is not a radical position; it reflects the legal consensus that has emerged in jurisdictions across the country that have implemented similar policies.

Beyond the constitutional question, there is a practical one. **Local law enforcement agencies operate under constrained budgets, and the personnel, facilities, and administrative capacity they devote to federal civil immigration functions are resources not available for local public safety priorities** — responding to violent crime, addressing substance use crises, building community relationships, and

solving property offenses. Rhode Island localities do not need to subsidize federal immigration enforcement at the expense of Rhode Island residents. **Federal immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility**, to be carried out by federal agencies with federal resources and subject to federal oversight.

The communities most directly affected by civil immigration enforcement — including U.S. citizen children, legal permanent residents, and long-established families — are Rhode Island communities. Their safety, their stability, and their trust in public institutions are Rhode Island interests. This bill protects those interests.

I urge the Committee to report this bill favorably.

Respectfully,

Emma Kahn

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