



545 Pawtucket Ave, Pawtucket RI 02908

April 9, 2024

House Committee On State Government & Elections
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Testimony in Support of H-7968

Good afternoon members of the House Committee on State Government & Elections:

My name is Ingrid Mejia, I belong to the organization AMOR. In my position as case manager I am here today to talk about the importance of the **bill (H-7968)**, a bill that would prohibit state or municipality from contracts to detain individuals for civil immigrations violations.

Everyday I receive calls from people whose family members have been detained and imprisoned indefinitely in discriminatory circumstances. They are detained in situations where citizens would not face the same level of punishment. They are often detained regardless of the physical, mental or economic status of the individual. In the majority of cases, they are the breadwinner of their family, who work hard in the heaviest jobs and at times are paid the lowest salaries. To make matters worse, they are often detained for long periods of time without access to representation or legal support. We know these people could be released by returning to their homes and thus continue supporting their families while moving through their immigration case.

A recent case exemplifies the harm this system can cause. A father called requesting assistance from AMOR. A father, the head of his household, currently detained at the Wyatt has been unable to receive adequate and timely medical treatment. His health is deteriorating, he is suffering from diabetes, losing his vision, all while struggling with post-trauma disorder. As an organization all we can do is advocate that he receive access to care. Although he needs specialized care he is unable to receive it. Due to the limitations and policies this individual does not have the right to be treated by a health specialist, he can only be treated by the Wyatt Detention Center medical team; which unfortunately does not have the capacity for its population. As a result the Wyatt is taking months to get this person care for a condition that requires daily treatment to maintain his health and prevent dire consequences.

We have another case of a 22-year-old Hispanic father here in the state detained and imprisoned for 5 months, with a large family of 6 members, 4 minors, all of whom depend on him. This family is at risk of eviction from their home due to non-payment of rent. Unfortunately our organization cannot offer financial support to families who are placed in these types of desperate conditions. We do not have the resources to cover all of the basic needs that these families have.

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These families deserve to be treated fairly, their rights must be respected, detention and imprisonment represents an unnecessary burden on state resources and contradicts the values of justice and humanity.

We advocate for a review of current policies and the adoption of alternative measures that promote the dignity and respect for human rights of all individuals regardless of their immigration status.

That is why I am in support of the bill H-7968 that would prohibits State or municipality from contracts to detain individuals for civil immigrations violations
And I ask that you support and vote in favor of the bill H-7968

Thank you

Ingrid Mejia

Case Manager
AMOR - Alliance to Mobilize Our Resistance

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