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**TESTIMONY ON 19-H 5518,
RELATING TO ENHANCED COMMUNITY PROTECTION
IN IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT ACTION
March 27, 2019**

The ACLU of Rhode Island strongly supports the concept of this legislation, which is designed to limit the ability of immigration agents to engage in arrests and other enforcement actions in certain “sensitive locations” in the community. The bill is partly based on a Department of Homeland Security memo which similarly specifies that its agents will not engage in routine enforcement of immigration laws in certain “sensitive” places like hospitals, religious institutions, and schools. Unfortunately, recent highly-publicized ICE enforcement actions across the country near schools and courthouses have made many people question whether that DHS memo retains validity, which is what has prompted necessary efforts like this at the state level to provide a separate level of protection.

We recognize that the bill needs some revisions. There are potential separation-of-powers issues in having legislators tell the courts how they must deal with federal law enforcement officials, nor do we believe that the state can dictate to private religious institutions how they interact with federal agencies.

Having said that, we do not believe the state is powerless to address this very critical issue. We would be happy to work with the bill’s sponsor on amendments that focus its reach on situations where the state *does* have the power to protect immigrants in the community from counter-productive ICE raids in locations where people should feel safe. Residents of our state should not have to think twice about going with a loved one to the hospital for critical medical care or testifying in court as the witness to a violent crime for fear of being picked up by ICE agents as a result. ICE’s actions to the contrary are mean-spirited and counter-productive, and we commend this bill’s sponsor for seeking to address this serious problem.