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**TESTIMONY ON 21-H 5749,
RELATING TO MUNICIPAL DETENTION FACILITY CORPORATIONS
and 21-H 5750,
BILLS RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT
March 15, 2021**

Each of these bills seeks to address in different ways the very important issue raised by the Wyatt Detention Facility's incarceration of civil immigrant detainees under a contract that the facility entered into with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in 2019. The bills would limit Wyatt and the Department of Corrections from collaborating with ICE and holding their detainees. The ACLU of Rhode Island supports these efforts in principle, although we recognize that, in light of litigation that was initiated after the City of Central Falls sought to rein in the detention center's collaboration with ICE, there are some legal limits on what the state can do.

When Wyatt reentered into a contract with ICE two years ago, the ACLU was extremely critical of it, and for good reason. The facility's history of cooperation with ICE was punctuated by a lawsuit the ACLU filed in 2008 and successfully settled after a civil detainee died in Wyatt's custody following months of abuse and a lack of medical care. As a result of that lawsuit, ICE cancelled its contract with Wyatt to hold immigrant detainees. It was therefore very distressing in 2019 to witness Wyatt once again take on this role, especially at a time when the agreement served to assist the federal government's blatant mistreatment of people fleeing danger and seeking asylum in our country.

The ACLU urges the committee to give these bills careful consideration and support ways to limit our State's cooperation with a broken and unjust immigration system.