

NEW HAMPSHIRE IMMIGRANT RIGHTS NETWORK

BY ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

January 14, 2026

Representative Erica Layon, Chair
Executive Departments and Administration Committee
New Hampshire House of Representatives
State House, Rm. 317
107 N. Main St.
Concord, NH 03301

RE: Support for HB 1609, Restrictions on Use of State, County and Municipal Funds for the Purpose of Immigrant Detention

Dear Representative Layon and Members of the Executive Departments and Administration Committee:

We are submitting this letter on behalf of the NH Immigrant Rights Network (NHIRN), a coalition of New Hampshire organizations and individuals working with and within immigrant communities to improve lives and ensure just treatment. We support HB 1609, which would restrict the use of state and local dollars to fund federal detention of people accused of civil immigration law violations. We urge members of the Committee to vote “ought to pass.”

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has launched a massive and largely unlawful civil incarceration machine, trampling on the rights and protections to which all persons within the United States are entitled. The current Administration has been seizing people and accusing them of being in the U.S. without permission as well as detaining an alarming number of U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents and other noncitizens with permission to be in the country.¹ Concurrently, there has been a dramatic increase in the incarceration rate of those seized even though the vast majority of the people held have no criminal records and pose no threat.²

¹ It is important to note that being in the U.S. without authorization is a civil, not criminal, violation of law. *See also, We Found That More Than 170 U.S. Citizens Have Been Held by Immigration Agents. They Have Been Kicked, Dragged and Detained for Days*, Pro Publica (Oct. 16, 2025) at <https://www.propublica.org/article/immigration-dhs-american-citizens-arrested-detained-against-will> ; George Will, *When ICE Came for a U.S. Citizen and Army Veteran*, Washington Post (Oct. 24, 2025) at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2025/10/24/ice-immigration-unconstitutional-detention-veteran-citizen/>; *We are not Safe in America Today. These American Citizens Say They were Detained by ICE*, CNN (June 27, 2025) at <https://www.cnn.com/2025/06/27/us/american-citizens-detained-ice-immigration>; *Who has been Arrested by ICE under Trump?*, BBC (June 11, 2025) at <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c86p821p660o>.

² As of November 30, 2025, 65,735 people were in DHS civil custody and 73.6% of those detained had no criminal record. For those that did, most of the criminal violations were minor infractions and traffic offenses. Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, Syracuse University (Nov. 30, 2025) at tracreports.org/immigration/quickfacts/.

The incarceration surge has already impacted New Hampshire. An unprecedented number of people are being detained in the state under an ICE contract with Strafford County Jail in Dover and in the federal prison in Berlin. In mid-December 2025, 347 people were being held in ICE detention between the two facilities.³ It is important to note that both of those facilities are overburdened and chronically understaffed.⁴

Not one dollar of New Hampshire taxpayer money should be spent to support ICE detention programs. ICE's incarceration scheme is exclusively a federal enterprise. We protest the billions of federal dollars that have been diverted into the cruel and unnecessary civil incarceration of immigrants,⁵ especially when the people of this country are facing a crisis of affordability. There is absolutely no basis to justify the use of state or local funds for this incarceration enterprise, particularly when our governmental leaders have warned us of the fragile nature of our own state economy.⁶

New Hampshire residents have made it clear that they oppose New Hampshire governmental entanglement in ICE detention programs and facilities. Over a thousand people protested at Merrimack Town Hall on January 8 after the Washington Post published an article naming the town as a possible site for an ICE detention center.⁷ Hundreds of New Hampshire residents have called their elected officials, written letters, signed petitions and attended County Commission meetings in Hillsborough, Merrimack and Rockingham Counties in opposition to ICE detention contracts. These civic actions continue.

For these reasons, we support passage of this bill and respectfully request that the Committee vote in favor of it.

³ *ICE Processing Center in Merrimack Reportedly in the Works*, Union Leader (Dec. 25, 2025, Updated Jan. 9, 2026) at https://www.unionleader.com/news/local/merrimack/ice-processing-center-in-merrimack-reportedly-in-the-works/article_9886ab19-81d1-4358-8595-2a3f57c2001b.html.

⁴ *Sen. Shaheen Calls for Corrections Officers to Get Pay Bump, Amid 'Catastrophic Working Conditions'*, WMUR (Jan. 13, 2026) at https://www.wmur.com/article/jeanne-shaheen-new-hampshire-corrections-pay/69981890?fbclid=IwY2xjawPUsZ1leHRuA2FlbQlxMQBicmlkETFiazFZdERobWVIZ1VJQlhBc3J0YwZhChBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODlwMDg5MgABHIYPyfzc8vsLV212uN6o8195FGqFGEXvkUHQBb_LKquVRS8qluizyGYE5SBG_aem_Cr-VjVR7XksH9yVsTzPoTw; *Strafford County Corrections Chief Warns of Chronic Staffing Shortage as Delegates Consider Audits and Contract Strategy*, Citizen Portal (Dec. 9, 2025) at <https://citizenportal.ai/articles/7160749/Strafford-County/New-Hampshire/Strafford-County-corrections-chief-warns-of-chronic-staffing-shortage-as-delegates-consider-audits-and-contract-strategy>.

⁵ *Immigration Detention Expansion in Trump's Second Term*, American Immigration Council (Jan. 14, 2026) at <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/report/immigration-detention>.

⁶ *Affordability Eroded: Changes to the Cost of Living in New Hampshire*, NH Fiscal Policy Institute (Oct. 25, 2025) at <https://nhfpi.org/resource/affordability-eroded-changes-to-the-cost-of-living-in-new-hampshire/>; *NH DHHS Slashes Programs to Meet \$51M Budget Reduction Mandate*, NH Public Radio (Dec. 17, 2025) at <https://www.nhpr.org/nh-news/2025-12-17/nh-dhhs-slashes-programs-to-meet-51m-budget-reduction-mandate>.

⁷ *More than a Thousand Residents Protest Against Merrimack ICE Facility*, Nashua Telegraph (Jan. 10, 2026) at <https://www.nashuatelegraph.com/news/2026/01/10/more-than-a-thousand-residents-protest-against-merrimack-ice-facility/>.

Sincerely,

Dylan Hoey and Daniel Maradiaga
NH Alliance for Immigrants and Refugees
Manchester, NH

Maggie Fogarty
American Friends Service Committee
Concord, NH

Grace Kindeke
Manchester, NH

Eva Castillo
Manchester, NH

Sarah Jane Knoy and Viola Katusiime
Granite State Organizing Project
Manchester, NH

Christine Wellington
Derry, NH

David Holt
Welcoming New Hampshire
Manchester, NH

NH Conference United Church of Christ Economic Justice Team, Pembroke NH

NH Conference United Church of Christ Immigrant & Refugee Support Group, Pembroke NH

Doris Hampton, Kent Street Coalition - Human Rights Working Group, Canterbury NH

Claudia Istel, NH Conference of the United Church of Christ Economic Justice Mission Group,
Acworth NH

Rev. Sandra Pontoh, NH Indonesian Community Support, Dover NH

Karishma Manzur, PhD, NH Peace Action, Exeter NH

David Blair, Project Home, Harrisville NH

Dr. Judith Reed, Project Home, Keene NH

Lindsay Dearborn, Hanover NH Friends Meeting, Lebanon NH

Alix Olson, Canaan NH

Angela Nicastro, Strafford NH

Anne G Romney, Portsmouth NH

Carolyn Morse-Finn, Nottingham NH

Elsa Voelcker, Kingston NH

Emma Gelinas, LICSW, Dover NH

Hana Cass, Exeter NH

John Schenk, Rindge NH

Jude Gadiel Everett Canales, Nashua NH

Julie Zimmer, Peterborough NH

Marci Stone, Somersworth NH

Marjorie Margolis, Sharon NH

Mary Vallier Kaplan, Peterborough NH

Maybeth Anderson, Dover NH

Rev. Dr. Gail Kinney, Canaan NH

Rev. Dr. Nancy Winterbottom, Exeter NH

Sally W Fleming, Lee NH