

ORGANIZATIONAL STATEMENTS

Deborah Debare, Executive Director - RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence:

“The RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence urges victims of domestic abuse and bystanders to call the police during an incident of violence. However, our advocates are often faced with a victim’s hesitation to contact law enforcement because of distrust in police intervention. This distrust is greater if the victim or bystander fears deportation. Perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence will often use a victim’s immigration status as a way to control them; intimidating them with threats of deportation and separation from children and family members. Abusers often lie about what the government might do to victims, raising fears even when victims have documented legal status. It is critical to our public safety that victims trust law enforcement rather than fear deportation or discrimination if they report violent crime. Trusting local police and feeling safe accessing the protection of the court system is vital for public safety.”

Rev. Dr. Don Anderson, Executive Minister - Rhode Island State Council of Churches:

“Our democracy demands justice as a core value. In the presence of unjust laws, conscience requires resistance. We join with the ACLU and other Rhode Island organizations calling on our Chief Justice, Governor and Attorney General to do all within their power to withhold cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement as it relates to the detention of undocumented persons who are not a danger to our society. Further, as people of faith, we call on these officials to honor the Biblical mandate to ‘welcome the stranger’ and do all in their power to make Rhode Island a safe place for all people of good will.”

Jim Vincent, President - NAACP – Providence Branch:

"The Providence Branch of the NAACP calls on Rhode Island to support our immigrant community. Harsh immigration practices are increasingly becoming a reality across the nation, and as the federal government cracks down on immigrants it is asking (and, sometimes, coercing) state and local governments to do its dirty work. There are specific, concrete ways that Governor Raimondo, Chief Justice Suttell, and Attorney General Kilmartin can push back against the federal government and support Rhode Islanders: call on the federal government to stop arresting people at courthouses, call out the federal government for threatening to withhold funds to cities that support their immigrant communities, and refuse to collaborate in the government's inhumane immigration enforcement practices. Rhode Island's immigrant community has a higher proportion of people of color than the state overall, and the NAACP is keenly interested in seeing that the state does not take part in any practices whose harm falls most acutely on communities of color."

Martha Yager, Program Coordinator

American Friends Service Committee – Southeastern New England:

“In the past four months I have been advised by a lawyer not to bring someone dealing with a wage theft case to the courthouse and have watched other people with wage theft complaints back off from efforts to collect their wages, and have been told of several people who have never returned from court in Massachusetts because they were picked up as they left the courthouse. It is having a profoundly chilling impact, not only on the immigrants who are rightly frightened but on the entire community as those who have caused harm are not held accountable for their actions.”

Raul Figueroa, Organizer - Fuerza Laboral:

The current political environment is having a far more long lasting affect that we can imagine right now. Parents don't want to get involved in school activities, workers do not want to call attention to themselves like demanding better working conditions or when they get their wages stolen and/or suffer discrimination, taunting, harassment etc. But the most important issue that almost all the time we take for granted is mental health. The fact that families don't know how to talk about this subject with each other is alarming and is causing more long lasting problems. Fuerza Laboral is committed to continue with fight for our communities, our families and our workers, highlighting the importance of strong communication, stronger ties for better communities and look for one another.

Steven Brown, Executive Director – ACLU of Rhode Island:

“Immigration enforcement activities – often the result of constitutionally dubious federal directives – are heating up, and people are afraid. The Governor, Attorney General and Chief Justice have it within their power to take specific, concrete actions to protect our immigrant communities – and now is the time for them to act.” - Steven Brown, ACLU of RI executive director.