

Dear Members of the Oregon House Judiciary Committee,

As a long-time resident of The Dalles, Oregon, I am well aware of the conflict over the use of our regional jail, NORCOR, to house immigration detainees, and I do not approve of it for multiple reasons. I am writing today to ask that you help end this practice by providing state funding to NORCOR in exchange for the termination of its contract with ICE, as provided for in HB 4121.

As a high school teacher for 32 years, I have worked closely with our immigrant community. They are my students, my friends and my neighbors. I know that mutual trust is a challenging but critical goal that we should be striving for. The presence of ICE in NORCOR diminishes the trust that many of our community members have worked so hard to build. And this is detrimental to our entire community.

I believe the use of my taxes to build this jail and now to use it to detain immigrants is a violation of Oregon's Sanctuary Law, which was convincingly upheld by a vote of the People in 2018. We are now learning that it actually costs more to house an immigration detainee than NORCOR receives from its ICE contract. So, my taxes are still being used to pay for this unconstitutional arrangement.

Further, NORCOR was not designed to hold detainees for long periods of time. Current detainees' basic human rights are not being met in this facility, including not having sufficient access to their families, education, and health services. The reports about the food these human beings are served at NORCOR is appalling. There are better alternatives than holding these people in NORCOR, most of whom are guilty of no crime other than coming to this country in search of a better life for their families. Oregon can and must do better than this.

I am unable to attend the hearing on Monday February 3rd, but I would like to have my comments included in the public record. Please, approve HB 4121 in your committee and work hard to pass it in the full House and Senate during this legislative session. It is the right thing to do!

Deborah Ferrer
The Dalles, OR