

Testimony in Support of HB 7039

March 30, 2015

*Mark Reid is a New Haven-based immigrants' rights advocate, class-action litigant (REID V. DONELAN), and founding president of FAMILIES & FRIENDS AGAINST DEPORTATION.*

Dear Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Mark Reid. I am a US veteran and I am the lead plaintiff in a federal lawsuit that succeeded in forcing the US immigration courts to allow many ICE detainees to petition the courts for bond and for release.

Despite the success of my case, I stand before you as a living, breathing example of the distress caused by the unfair application of detention and deportation rules.

Though I have fulfilled my obligations to the State of Connecticut's justice system, and though I have been found by the Board of Immigration Appeals to have deserved not to be deported, my incarceration by the Department of Homeland Security has cost me quite a lot.

Following my release from state custody I was immediately transferred to ICE, and kept unlawfully for 18 months, until a coalition of immigrants' rights groups, including activists led by John Lugo and Megan Fountain of Unidad Latina en Accion (ULA), and Michael Wishnie and the wonderful lawyers at Yale Law School, supported my cause and I was finally released.

In the meantime, however, my relationship with my teenage daughter suffered. My eventual reintegration into society was slowed down by the financial woes that incarceration always produces, and still I find myself constrained almost to the breaking point by a monitoring system for ICE detainees who are released that seems to bear little resemblance to a fair procedure, and seems, rather, to be a for-profit windfall for ICE's private contractors.

ICE detainers are still being implemented in Connecticut despite numerous federal court decisions that have found such detentions unconstitutional.

It's time for Connecticut to end these unlawful detentions. East Haven did it, and the rest of Connecticut can do it too.

Our cause is just, and we can affect the lives of many. Let's pass HB 7039.

Thank you.