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ENVISION FREEDOM SUBMITS TESTIMONY TO NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL ABOUT ABUSE, NEGLECT IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION AT ORANGE COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY & ARGUES FOR END TO ICE CONTRACTS IN NEW YORK STATE

New York, NY—Members of the Envision Freedom Fund community offered forceful testimony today during a day-long hearing convened by the New York City Council Committee on Immigration, chaired by Council Member Shahana Hanif, to discuss the conditions of immigration detention in New York State, particularly at the Orange County Correctional Facility (OCCF) in Goshen, NY. In March, the Committee will introduce a resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, the Dignity Not Detention Act, which will prohibit governmental entities from entering into agreements with ICE to house individuals in immigration detention facilities, and require existing contracts to be terminated.

“There are so many things I want to share with you but the most important topic I wish to address is the lack of medical care at Orange.... This is something that I experienced. I suffer from two chronic conditions that require daily medications: high blood pressure and stomach gastritis. They always failed to provide me with my medication, about two or three times a week, so the treatment did not have much effect.... When I went days without taking my medication, I would feel dizzy from the blood pressure. And with the gastritis, I suffered from a lot of stomach pain,” **said Felipe Cortes, an immigrant detained at OCCF for 12 months** who gained his freedom after Envision Freedom paid his bond in December 2021.

“The day to day tasks of my work consist of listening to the myriad atrocities detained people have endured and supporting them in addressing their subsequent emergent needs, overwhelmingly related to medical attention and mental health care. The toll ICE detention takes on one’s medical and mental health is immense and sometimes irreversible,” **said Ambien Mitchell, Envision Freedom Fund Post-Release Coordinator.**

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“After transfers started happening, bonds for people at OCCF went as high as \$20,000. Most immigrant families cannot afford [these bond amounts], so their loved ones stay lingering in detention due to lack of funds. . . . The sense of desperation and fear from people detained in this facility is something we cannot ignore. People should not be caged in a place where they feel they can lose their lives,” **said Rosa Santana, Envision Freedom Fund Bond Director.**

“As you may know, the [Orange County] jail has guards who have and had [ties to white supremacist groups](#) who go out of their way to make the lives of monolingual non-English speakers and Black immigrants—and I don’t say this lightly—a living hell. . . . The solution is to advocate for and fund true rehabilitation programs so we can end jails and no one has to be at the mercy and rule of white supremacists. In the meantime, I urge you to join us advocating for the end of all the ICE contracts in New York through the Dignity Not Detention bill,” **said Tania Mattos, Envision Freedom Fund Director of Advocacy & Policy.**

[Full testimony for Felipe Cortes, Ambien Mitchell, Rosa Santana, and Tania Mattos can be found here.](#)

Envision Freedom is one of six organizations that filed a [complaint](#) with the Department for Homeland Security Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, based on the firsthand accounts of detained people, calling for an investigation into ongoing racist abuse, medical neglect, violent retaliation, punitive solitary confinement, COVID-19 negligence, religious discrimination and overall intolerable conditions at OCCF.

Envision Freedom Fund (formerly Brooklyn Community Bail Fund) works alongside impacted communities to dismantle the oppressive and interconnected criminal legal and immigration systems. With freedom as our guiding principle, we invest in innovative campaigns and programs that aim to win long-term, transformative change, while meeting the urgent needs of community members in the present.

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