

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 424

Approved October 22, 2025

WHEREAS, Federal immigration enforcement has increasingly occurred in and around courthouses across the United States, including in Rhode Island state courts, such as at the Garrahy Judicial Complex; and

WHEREAS, For decades, federal policy designated courthouses as sensitive locations, where immigration enforcement was generally limited to exceptional circumstances or emergencies; and

WHEREAS, The increased presence of immigration enforcement in or near courthouses has caused fear and uncertainty among residents, discouraging individuals from attending hearings, accessing the legal processes necessary to assert their rights, complying with court orders, or seeking lawful immigration relief; and

WHEREAS, People attending court hearings are fulfilling their legal obligations, and fear of immigration enforcement undermines due process and the principle that courts should be open and accessible to all; and

WHEREAS, In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rhode Island Judiciary implemented emergency measures to protect public health and ensure continuity of operations, including the expansion of remote and hybrid hearing capabilities; and

WHEREAS, On April 2, 2021, the Rhode Island Supreme Court approved an amendment to Rule 7 of the Superior Court Rules of Civil Procedure, authorizing courts to conduct hearings remotely, either in whole or in part, at the discretion of the court or upon a party's request; and

WHEREAS, This amendment and the accompanying technological capacity have since demonstrated that remote hearings increase access to justice, reduce unnecessary in-person exposure, and can minimize the chilling effects of immigration enforcement on court participation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council respectfully urges the Rhode Island Judiciary guarantee accommodations for remote hearings by request in District Court, Family Court, and Superior Court, as well as any other courts under their jurisdiction within the City of Providence, when feasible and consistent with due process protections; and


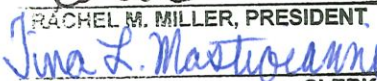
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council had directed the Municipal Court of Providence and the Probate Court of Providence to offer accommodations for remote hearings by request, when feasible and consistent with due process protections, and they will do so beginning November 1, 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Providence Housing Court, under the direction of Mayor Brett P. Smiley, also guarantee accommodations for virtual hearings by request, whenever feasible; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be sent to the Chief Judges of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, District Court (Sixth Division), Family Court (Providence County), and Superior Court (Providence/Bristol County); Governor Daniel J. McKee; House of Representatives Speaker Joe Shekarchi; Senate President Valarie Lawson; and Mayor Brett P. Smiley; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council affirms that access to the courts is fundamental to the fair administration of justice and no resident should be deterred from fulfilling legal obligations out of fear of immigration enforcement.

IN CITY COUNCIL
OCT 16 2025
READ AND PASSED


RACHEL M. MILLER, PRESIDENT

CLERK

I HEREBY APPROVE.



Mayor

Date: 10/22/25