

Immigration Bond Fund

What is a bond?

A bond is not a fine. It is a guarantee to the government that, if you are let out of detention, you will go to all your hearings and will obey the judge's order at the end of the case. If you go to all your immigration hearings or interviews, whoever paid your bond will get the money back when your case is over. If you lose your case, you must report to DHS or you will not get the bond money back.

Where?

The Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) is an immigration prison located in Tacoma, Washington. Opened in 2004, the NWDC is a privately owned and operated by the GEO Group on behalf of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The NWDC's current capacity is 1575, making it one of the largest immigration prisons in the United States.

The NWDC has been under heavy scrutiny because of human rights abuses. It is currently being [sued](#) by the Washington's Attorney General, Bob Ferguson, for its labor practices. As well as the ACLU, for retaliation it took against a detainees participating in a hunger strike. Detainees from the NWDC have staged several hunger strikes, to show the severity of abuses and violations of basic rights that place within its walls. In 2008, Seattle University School of Law and OneAmerica produced a scathing [report](#), outlining many abuses. It is because of these events that interest has grown for detainees to have legal representation and for the creation of an immigration bond fund.

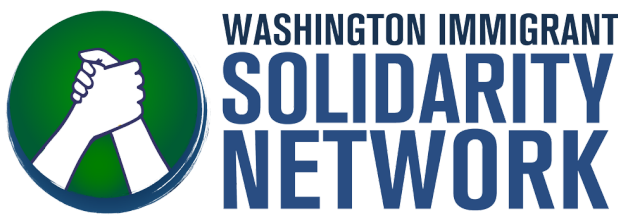
Immigration Bond Fund

The Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN) is in the process of establishing an immigrant bond fund to bail out eligible detainees. WAISN is a coalition of organizations and individuals that strive to protect and serve immigrants and refugees. We are working on the research, partnerships, and logistics to create the fund. Some key components of the fund include:

- Steering committee- determines criteria for clients and funds allocated
- Crowdfunding model- fundraising platforms, events & organizational fundraising
- Cost sharing agreement with the families and friends of detainees
- Beneficiaries of the bond fund are asked to stay involved

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Two barriers into the successful creation of a sustainable fund are the *high bond amounts* set by immigration judges and the *long turnaround times* for bond reimbursement. The bond amounts can be as high as \$20,000 and the turnaround times are 2-3 years, due to the length of immigration case resolutions.

Why the need for a bond fund?

Under the current system, detainees either remain detained because of inability to pay or their families and friends are burdened with high predatory loans in exchange for bond postings. In order for family members to come up with bail they must work with bond agencies that ask for collateral (e.g. a house) and charge high interest loans. These loans, however, are only accessible to US citizens or residents, therefore, not available to most affected detainee families.

There exist bond securers, most notably Libre by Nexus, who work with undocumented immigrants; however, these services are highly predatory. They require high upfront payments, charge crippling monthly principal/interest payments, require clients to wear GPS tracking ankle bracelets, and are allowed to enter the home of the client without notice.

Individuals who gain their release in a bond hearing also have a very high success rate in establishing that they should not be deported in the first place, and can therefore remain in the U.S. In 2015, two out of every three individuals released after the judge granted bond ultimately prevailed in their Immigration Court proceeding. The remaining proportion ordered deported - that is, one out of three - was significantly lower than those ordered deported overall in Immigration Court proceeding completed last year.

For those granted bond, about one in five remained detained until the end of their case, presumably because they were unable to post the bond amount set.

Immigration Bond Financial Sponsors & Partners

The capital for the Bond Fund would be revolving; however, the biggest hurdle is obtaining the capital for an initial launch and ensuring the adequate liquidity to sustain the fund until the bonds from the cases are returned in 2-6 years (depending on case specifics). *Waisn's ask* from our financial sponsors and partners is assistance in raising the initial capital and ensuring adequate liquidity until the Bond Fund's capital is returned through the completion of the initial immigration cases.

Goals

In the first year, we have established a conservative fundraising goal of \$100,000. This would allow us to bond out around 10 detainees and pilot the program and steering committee, while also maintaining a healthy level of capital.

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