

Boston's clergy is asking Citizens Bank to stop funding ICE detention centers

They're among those calling on Citizens Bank to end its business relationship with two for-profit prison contractors

By [Adrian Walker](#) Globe Columnist, Updated May 2, 2026, 12:01 a.m.



Anti-ICE protesters have been criticizing Citizens Bank, including in January in Northampton. PHOTO BY PEYTON FLEMING

Pastor Dieufort Fleurissaint is a man whose Mattapan-based ministry has seen more than its share of suffering in the Age of Trump.

He has watched his [supporters and parishioners disappear](#) without warning into federal detention. He's seen the fear in the faces of community members at the hands of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE.

So it is an easy call for him to stand with fellow members of the Boston clergy in protesting Citizens Bank — a longtime ally — for its role in financially supporting the private detention centers ICE uses to detain immigrants along the path to deportation.

“No financial institution should profit from human suffering,” Fleurissaint said. “These facilities are hidden from public view, and represent a troubled reality. As a Christian, I would say they have no compassion for humanity.”



Fleurissant is a member of the [Greater Boston Interfaith Organization](#) — a coalition of religious organizations and activist groups — that is calling on Citizens Bank to end its business relationship with two companies that build ICE detention facilities.

CoreCivic and The GEO Group are two for-profit prison companies whose facilities are used to hold ICE detainees. GBIO believes that Citizens Bank has provided more than \$2 billion in financing to the two companies over the past 12 years.

Last week, GBIO led a group of about 60 organizations that [protested during a Citizens shareholder meeting](#) in Providence, demanding that the bank sever all ties with the prison companies. Though GBIO has long been politically active, this level of activism is almost without precedent in its 28-year history.

It's even more striking because Citizens Bank has historically been a supporter of the group. Years ago, it helped lead a financial literacy program for GBIO members, and counts many of the individual churches, synagogues, and mosques affiliated with the group as customers.

GBIO estimates that its members have \$12.7 million on deposit with Citizens — money it is threatening to withdraw in \$1 million increments, beginning on Monday.

Rev. Ray Hammond of [Bethel AME Church](#), a mainstay of GBIO and a former member of the board of Citizens Bank of Massachusetts, said the protest comes in response to a national emergency in protecting rights.

ICE is “part of an administration which is clearly invested in intimidating, not just immigrants, but also American citizens if they're not on board with their program,” Hammond said. “And we're not on board with that.”

The amount of money GBIO partners have in accounts at Citizens is a pittance in the context of a major bank. But the group is counting on its visibility and ability to use the

bully pulpit to extract change.

Hammond was one of the GBIO representatives who confronted Citizens CEO Bruce Van Saun face-to-face at the shareholders' meeting. He said bank officials quickly agreed to a meeting, fueling hopes that something can get done.

Citing privacy concerns, Citizens Bank spokesman Rory Sheehan said the bank, as a matter of policy, will not publicly confirm any client relationships. He also wouldn't confirm that the bank plans to meet with GBIO. But the bank did provide a statement about the subject of the protest.

"Every relationship is subject to rigorous due diligence and ongoing monitoring, and we are prepared to exit relationships when those standards are not met, consistent with contractual and regulatory obligations," the bank said.

"More broadly, it is unfair to view Citizens through a single-issue lens. We remain deeply committed to supporting the communities we serve."

At a time when activists are seeking any lever of protest they can reach, this is a good cause. ICE has absolutely wreaked havoc on our cities, our neighborhoods, and our neighbors, with a force that would have been unimaginable before Trump took control.

The fight against ICE's actions is now being taken to the corporate infrastructure that supports its extremely dubious activities.

I asked Fleurissaint what GBIO is really asking the bank to do. "We want them to act morally, and respect principles of justice and human dignity," he said.

That doesn't sound like a lot to ask. Citizens is now on the clock.

Adrian Walker is a Globe columnist. He can be reached at adrian.walker@globe.com. Follow him [@Adrian_Walker](https://twitter.com/Adrian_Walker).

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