

## Chris O'Brien

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**Sent:** Wednesday, July 22, 2020 12:00 AM  
**To:** Chris O'Brien  
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**Subject:** Testimony for 7/22 House Committee on Finance - Close the ACI High Security Center

Dear House Finance Committee Representatives,

My name is Garren Jansezian and I am a constituent of Rhode Island. I live at 25 Coggeshall street in Providence.

I'm writing today to demand you take action to close the ACI High Security Center. While the Governor's current budget proposes closing two modules within High Security, this budget plan needs to go further and close the High Security Center outright. Solitary confinement is a form of torture that causes enormous amount of physical, emotional, and mental stress. No person, no matter their crime, deserves to be placed in a cage and treated like an animal. The money wasted on high security can be funneled into what's needed most: education, social services, mental health support and other safety nets which act as an investment in our communities. We must stop the criminalization of Black, Brown, and poor people of Rhode Island. Shutting down high security is the first step.

I moved to Providence from Canada in 2005. I attend public schools, first a Robert F. Kennedy, then Greene, E-Cubed Academy, and finally the University of Rhode Island via Talent Development. Many of my classmates throughout the years "fell through the cracks" so to speak. Economic uncertainty and other forms of hardship were daily realities for my peers and myself. I witnessed young people be subjected to the school-to-prison pipeline, punished for their behavior rather than supported. Penal institutions do NOT strike at the root of crime or "criminal behavior". No one is biologically predisposed to commit crime. We are shaped by our environments. When you go to schools that are crumbling, face teachers who don't understand your world or culture, are deprived of extracurricular activities, and social spaces, it's hard to care about the world you live in. The alienation produced by poverty, the proliferation of minimum wage jobs, and lack of better prospects, are all reasons for crime... Simply put, if people have their basic needs met they wouldn't have to resort to criminal activity.

I hope you take the steps necessary to close high side. If not, the anguish those prisoners feel is on you.

Take care,  
Garren Jansezian