

Thank you, Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Maggie Picot, and I come before you respectfully to request your support on House Bill 5021. This Bill seeks to add two positions to the Correctional Officer Retirement Legislation, those being the Administrator of Community Confinement and the Home Confinement Coordinator. They need to be added because they are the only two positions supervising Correctional Officers that are not covered under the Correctional Officer Retirement Statute.

I retired in January after over 41 years of service at the Rhode Island Department of Corrections. I graduated from the Correctional Officer Training Academy in 1983 and was hired as a Classification Counselor and worked at the ACI for over 14 years. I was later promoted twice, first to Home Confinement Coordinator and then to my last position as Administrator of Community Confinement. I am honored to have led the Home Confinement Unit for over 25 years.

I supervised the Home Confinement Coordinator and a staff of Correctional Officers and Community Program Counselors. We provided intensive supervision to over 200 adult male and female inmates on active GPS monitoring throughout the state of Rhode Island.

Most positions covered under the Correctional Officer Retirement Statute are Correctional Officers and their supervisors, and managers, including Lieutenants, Captains, Deputy Wardens, and Wardens, all of whom supervise inmate

populations. The two positions that need to be included in the Statute, Administrator of Community Confinement and Home Confinement Coordinator, also both involve 24-hour supervision of Correctional Officers and inmates at the Department of Corrections. Inmates sentenced to Home Confinement or placed on Home Confinement as a condition of bail are legally considered incarcerated, the same as being held at the ACI. The threat level is the same.

The Correctional Officer Retirement Legislation was originally written in 1983, which predates the creation of the Community Confinement Program, which was created in 1989. The Administrator and Coordinator positions did not exist until 1990, seven years after the Correctional Officer Retirement Legislation was written, and the statute was never updated.

In addition, it is critical for the future of the Community Confinement Program that the two positions require institutional corrections experience, again because they involve supervising Correctional Officers and inmates. Both the former Home Confinement Coordinator and I were promoted from institutional corrections. The statute as it is currently written, excluding the Administrator and the Coordinator, would be a deterrent to the existing talent pool in the Correctional Officer ranks. Most informed employees would not consider these promotional opportunities, as accepting either position would cause a reduction in their retirement benefits.

I have been trying to get this corrected on my own since December of 2019. I spoke with the Retirement Board and the Governor's Office. Everyone I spoke to agreed that the Correctional Officer Retirement Statute needs to be updated, and I hope you do too.

The true spirit of the Correctional Officer Retirement Statute is to secure fair and equitable retirement benefits for all Correctional Officers, their supervisors, and managers. This is an issue of basic fairness, and it is for these reasons that I compel the committee to strongly consider supporting this bill. ***The Administrator and Coordinator are the only two positions supervising Correctional Officers, in the entire Department of Corrections that are not included in the statute.*** Since no one has ever retired from either position, this issue was never corrected.

This is the third consecutive year this bill has been proposed. Last year, Representatives Diaz, Casimiro, Quattrocchi, and Slater sponsored House bill (H-7275), and it was held for further study in House Finance. Senator Cano introduced the companion bill (S-2600), and it was passed unanimously in both Senate Finance and the full Senate.

In closing, it is important to note that the fiscal impact, although immeasurable, would not be significant, because this request only involves two positions. Additionally, we respectfully request that the Bill be retroactive to October 7,

1990, the date the positions were created. As currently written, the Bill indicates that the act would take effect upon passage, which means that the retirement earnings would not be corrected, and we would still not receive the pensions we have earned.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration and allowing me to comment on this matter. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.