

THE RHODE ISLAND ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS

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FOUNDED 1988 BY
RICHARD M. CASPARIAN,
PUBLIC DEFENDER

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TESTIMONY OF THE RHODE ISLAND ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS (RIACDL) IN SUPPORT OF 2024—H 7523.

RIACDL is proud to lend its enthusiastic support to the legislation under consideration here that would waive the fees charged by RIDOH for incarcerated people to obtain certified copies of their birth certificates upon their release from prison. RIACDL's support is grounded in the following:

- Those individuals recently released from prison face nearly insurmountable obstacles to successfully achieving their rehabilitation and re-entry into society. Access to housing, employment, education, treatment, and other services necessary to achieve these goals are particularly problematic and can go unmet for no other reason than the individual has no means of identifying themselves or obtaining a state identification card.
- This proposal addresses these longstanding concerns among the currently incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and various advocacy groups who have asked that the state prioritize ensuring that those reentering the community have the appropriate records and documents needed to attain employment, register for benefits, rent a home or a variety of other relevant scenarios.
- Many other states and even the federal government have enacted similar measures for their incarcerated populations. This will bring Rhode Island in line with the proactive steps other states have taken to ensure those leaving its custody depart with needed documentation/records.

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IN SUPPORT OF 2024—H 7523.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE: The role of the Rhode Island Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers [RIACDL] in our state's system of criminal justice and interest in the issues presented in the legislation under consideration here are grounded in the following:

- RIACDL is an affiliate organization of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL). RIACDL was founded in 1988 by the late Richard M. Casparian, former Public Defender of the State of Rhode Island, from 1988 until his death in 1997.
- RIACDL's objectives and purposes, as stated in its bylaws are to: 1) foster, maintain and encourage the integrity, independence and expertise of lawyers engaged in the practice of criminal law 2) to work toward achieving justice and dignity for persons accused of crimes and 3) to influence the criminal law and criminal procedure for the betterment of the criminal justice system and members of the Association.
- RIACDL has worked to achieve its objectives and purposes through education and mutual support of its almost 150 members.
- RIACDL also expresses itself publicly and frequently on important criminal justice issues within its area of expertise such as the legislation under consideration here.
- RIACDL is registered with the Rhode Island Secretary of State's Office as a non-profit corporation pursuant to RIGL Sec. 7-6-1, et seq.