



RHODE ISLAND SUPREME COURT

Office of General Counsel
Licht Judicial Complex
250 Benefit Street
Providence, RI 02903
401-222-8714

March 11, 2025

Via Electronic Mail (HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov)

Chairman Robert E. Craven, Sr.
House Committee on the Judiciary
Rhode Island State House
House Lounge
Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill #5646: An Act Relating to Courts and Civil Procedure - Procedure Generally - Jury

Dear Chairman Craven:

I write on behalf of the Rhode Island Supreme and Superior Courts to respectfully express concerns regarding House Bill #5646, scheduled to be heard this evening before the House Judiciary Committee. If enacted, this legislation would exempt persons over seventy (70) years of age from serving as jurors on a grand jury or jury trial in the Rhode Island courts.

Jurors perform a vital function in the American system of justice. The protection of individual rights and liberties is largely dependent upon the participation of the public in criminal and civil trials. Members of the public are also vital to the criminal charging process as participants in the Grand Jury. National studies consistently show a diverse jury, one which brings a wide range of experiences, expertise, and life experiences, deliberates longer, discusses more facts, and lessens the impact of individual and unintentional biases. Older jurors bring a vast array of experience and wisdom to the jury room. They are essential to a functioning jury system. Also, passage of this bill will exacerbate the challenges already present in finding a diverse set of individuals who have the financial and lifestyle means to sit on a jury.

Lastly, a blanket exemption is unnecessary. The Jury Commissioner routinely exempts individuals from jury service in the event an individual has a hardship, or health, medical, or personal impediments to jury service.

I ask the House Judiciary Committee to carefully consider the impact of this bill upon the Rhode Island jury system. Thank you for the opportunity to express the Judiciary's concerns regarding this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Kelly".
Kathleen Kelly
General Counsel