



**AFSCME Rhode Island Council 94**  
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To: House Judiciary Committee Members

From: Executive Board Leadership Team, Local 314

Subject: H-5670 - PRO

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In order to provide you with a knowledge base as why as an entity feel it would be prudent for the State Legislature to pass this act, we would like to present these facts as they relate to the job duties of the two classifications that are cited within the language of the act.

1) Juvenile Program Workers, and when assigned Shift Coordinators, are historically relied upon and tasked with providing the custodial security while transporting adjudicated youth under court order to privately operated group home placements throughout the State and even into nearby Massachusetts, and other neighboring New England States, as well as being tasked with responding to these same group home placements after a court ordered youth has violated their conditions of probation in order to provide for secure custodial transportation back to this secure facility. At times these violations of probation conditions have been for violations of State and or Local General Laws.

2) Juvenile Program Workers are by job description tasked on a daily basis with the responsibility for the custodial supervision of youth offender both adjudicated and non-adjudicated whom are held awaiting sentencing and whom have been sentenced to the Rhode Island Training School for Youth. The Shift Coordinators act as their first line supervisors, much like the relationship between adult Correctional Officers and the Correctional Officer Lieutenants. Youth are brought into the facility by Law Enforcement Officers who are defined under this act S-2419/H-7443. The Job duties of the Juvenile Program Worker and or Shift Coordinator as it relates to custody, control, and public safety is not very different to those of the Adult Correctional Officer, Correctional Officer Lieutenants, Captains, Sergeants, and investigators, within the RI Department of Corrections and or The Donald Wyatt Detention Facility represented in this legislation. The main and only difference in mission is that the job classifications represented within this act, is the Juvenile Program Workers and Shift Coordinators have the additional responsibility of assisting in the rehabilitation of the youth charged to our care. This addition does not make the fact that those sentenced to this facility are no less dangerous than their adult counterparts a fact easily corroborated by their series of charges.

**3)** Juvenile Program Workers and Shift Coordinators share the same public safety responsibility as do their esteemed counterparts as defined and represented in the legislation. Juvenile program Workers and Shift Coordinators transport these incarcerated youth back into the community on a daily basis so that health care issues may be addressed. When an adjudicated and or non-adjudicated youth is transported to the Court House for arraignment and or for subsequent scheduled appearances, they are transported out by members of the Rhode Island Division of Sheriffs, once again whom are listed in the current legislation and defined as having "Peace Officer status" 12-7-21. The question becomes self-evident. Does an incarcerated youth offender become any less dangerous while in the custody of a Juvenile Program Worker and or Shift Coordinator? Or do they suddenly become more likely to escape when they are transported into the facility upon being arrested and or transported to their arraignment and or following court dates that the individuals transporting these youth and whom at that moment are providing for their custodial supervision happen to be defined as "Peace Officer" under RIGL 12-7-21.

**4)** The Juvenile Program Workers and Shift Coordinators employed at the Rhode Island Training School are subject to the same concerns as the professions defined by this legislation as it relates to their wanting to have the same ability to be recognized as the Juvenile Corrections Professionals that they are, and to have the same level of statutory authority that is afforded too all the other entities that are listed in the current legislation. Having this statutory authority while actively on the job only will allow a Juvenile Program Worker and or Shift Coordinator to while out in the community at large with a youth be they adjudicated and or non-adjudicated the ability to act under color of law while on public and private property. Inclusion within this act will allow these two Rhode Island Training School job classifications the ability to enforce the General Laws of the State as they relate to returning a violated youth from placement to the facility for either a reported escape RIGL 11-25-16 and or for a violation of RIGL that results in new criminal charges being later filed by a local law enforcements agency, the State Police and or a Juvenile Probation and Parole Officer. And the statutory authority while providing for the lawful security and supervision of youths while conducting offsite physicians and hospital visitations which occur on public and or private lands or property, as well as providing for offsite custodial supervision for youth attending funerals upon the order of the court.

**5)** Inclusion in the legislation would also serve to strengthen as well as provide the Juvenile Program Workers and Shift Coordinators with the authority to actually enforce the General Laws of the State of Rhode Island within the confines of the Rhode Island Training School with regards to gaining compliance from the residential population.