



Representative Robert Craven, Chair
House Judiciary Committee

April 1, 2025

Support for bills H5072, H5178, H5441, and H5647, relating to expungement

Chair Craven and Members of the Committee,

RI Working Families Power writes in strong support of four expungement reform bills in the House Judiciary Committee today: H5072, H5178, H5441, and H5647. Collectively, these bills would move Rhode Island much further toward a system based on justice, restoration, and revitalization—rather than one based solely on punishment.

Our state's current system too often creates lifelong obstacles for those who have completed their sentences and are working to rebuild their lives. Criminal records follow people indefinitely, creating nearly insurmountable barriers to securing employment, housing, education, and other fundamental necessities. These bills offer a comprehensive approach to removing these barriers:

- H5072—Would allow individuals with felony convictions to expunge up to six misdemeanor offenses, recognizing that minor infractions shouldn't compound the challenges people face when reentering society.
- H5178—Creates a pathway for those with multiple felony convictions (excluding violent crimes) to petition for expungement after demonstrating a decade of law-abiding behavior.
- H5441—Reduces long waiting periods for expungement. This brings RI in line with many other states by allowing misdemeanor expungement after three years instead of five, and allowing felony expungement after five years instead of ten.
- H5647—Establishes clear criteria for judges to evaluate good moral character in expungement cases for people with multiple felonies and misdemeanors who have maintained a clean record for 10 years, ensuring consideration of the person's background, employment, family ties, and overall progress since conviction.

These reforms recognize a fundamental truth: people deserve the opportunity to move forward with their lives. No one should face endless punishment through permanent records that limit their potential

and participation in society. Our justice system *must* support rehabilitation and help to open doors—not close them—for people seeking to rebuild. These bills maintain appropriate safeguards while creating pathways for people to move forward with their lives, and we urge their passage.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Zachary Mezera

Working Families Power