

April 1, 2025

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am a Providence resident writing in full support of House Bill No. 5650, which would prohibit family court from detaining or committing any child 12 years or younger to training school, for any offense unless the child is charged with murder, first degree sexual assault, or an attempt to commit such offenses.

There is overwhelming research that demonstrates the destructive, traumatic impacts of incarceration on children. Data demonstrates that children entering youth correctional facilities are far more likely to have mental health problems such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal thoughts. Incarceration makes it less likely that young people will re-enroll in and graduate high school, with rippling effects including lowered employment and earnings in adulthood. Incarceration in juvenile justice facilities is even associated with shorter life expectancy.

**This cruelty—which is disproportionately inflicted on Black and brown children in Rhode Island and across the country—simply cannot be justified.** Incarceration of children does not reduce harmful or criminalized behaviors. In fact, state-level data on recidivism consistently show that youth who are released from correctional confinement experience high rates of rearrest, new adjudications or convictions, and reincarceration.

The findings make absolute sense. What message do we give our children when we lock them away? Do we show them that they are worthy, capable, and cared for? Or that they are a problem, to be removed from their homes and loved ones and disappeared behind the walls?

Please, protect our children as if they were your own. I urge you to pass HB5650 without delay.

Sincerely,  
Anusha Alles