

THE RHODE ISLAND ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS

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FOUNDED 1988 BY
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PUBLIC DEFENDER

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TESTIMONY OF THE RHODE ISLAND ASSOCIATION OF **CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS (RIACDL) IN SUPPORT OF** **2025—H 5349 & 2025—S 0618** ⁱ

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.

ⁱ 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 for the State of Rhode Island from 1988 until his death in 1997. RIACDL's mission includes, "working toward achieving justice and dignity... for persons accused of crime and the criminal justice system, and to influence the criminal law for the betterment of the criminal justice system...." RIACDL is registered with the Rhode Island Secretary of State's Office as a nonprofit organization.