Dear members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to strongly oppose the Sentencing Reconsideration Act (H 5362). The parole board and the existence of post-conviction relief are already in place for all the reasons given for the purpose and intent of this act. Representative Casimiro stated to a witness in the last House Judiciary hearing that inmates currently would have no recourse for freedom if new evidence arises in their case or if new laws pass that should be retroactively applied to them, but filing for post-conviction relief is exactly what an inmate would do in those situations. Perhaps she is not familiar with the process.

The other intent and the majority of the bill is aimed at doing exactly what the parole board already does, which is evaluate rehabilitative efforts. As I'm sure you know, no inmate other than those serving life and some with habitual offender sentences will ever serve more than a third of their sentences without having the opportunity to see the parole board. Those serving very lengthy sentences (over 30 years) who are not serving life or certain habitual offender sentences will be eligible to see the parole board after ten years even if a 1/3 of their sentence would actually be longer than that. If an inmate is denied parole and given a re-consideration, the parole board's own guidelines state that they will not wait longer than 6-years for another review and youthful offenders are capped off at no longer than 3-years for reviews. Inmates can even write to the parole board at any time giving the board their reasons they feel they should get another review or an earlier review. Re-consideration dates or denials are not set in stone as the law gives the parole board great discretion.

The parole board even has special consideration given to inmates convicted as juveniles, those defined as " youthful offenders", and the use of medical and geriatric parole for compassionate releases. These groups of inmates, which the bill mentions as candidates for sentence reconsideration are already essentially getting that sentence reconsideration when they see parole. Clearly, the parole board and post-conviction relief ensures inmates are not locked up and left to rot in prison with no recourse, which is unfortunately what some politicians and inmate advocacy groups like to portray is happening.

In addition to duplicating what the parole board already does and ignoring the existence and purpose of post-conviction relief, it's passage will clog the courts and be a financial burden on the law-abiding citizens of RI, because ultimately it is us who will pay for these extra court hearings. But most importantly, this act is an insult to crime victims. Not only do victims endure the trauma of crime, the exhausting court process including sentencing and appeals, having to plead with the parole board to have their perpetrator or loved one's perpetrator complete their sentences, but passage of this bill will add more court hearings for them to have to attend if they want to voice their opposition to the perpetrator's release.

Victims should not be re-victimized by our criminal justice system, and passage of this bill would do exactly that.

Thank you,

Nicole Kettelle