

The Just Criminal Justice Group, LLC



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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF 2026—H 8059

This piece of legislation would permit social gaming at certain locations where gambling is incidental to a bona fide friendship and only players of the game would receive anything of value. This support is based upon the following:

1. The legislation is nearly identical to legislation introduced in 2015 at the request of then Rep. Gregory Amore (2015-H-5244).
2. Members of the General Assembly, when considering any piece of criminal justice legislation, ought to consider whether the legislation makes sense fiscally while also promoting and enhancing public safety . That is because every time a piece of legislation is enacted into law that creates a new crime, raises the maximum sentence for an existing crime or parole eligibility, creates a mandatory minimum sentence, or decreases “good time” for certain offenses, there are attendant costs that ripple through every component of the criminal justice system including the courts, corrections, probation and parole, prosecution, law enforcement (both state and local), and public defense. This cost v. public safety enhancement conversation makes sense especially in difficult economic times.
3. The same conversations should take place when considering the re-classification of low-level offenses from criminal misdemeanors to civil violations. Such was the case in the past when the General Assembly re-classified certain offenses (such as possession of small amounts of marijuana and operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license) from misdemeanor crimes to civil violations.
4. This conversation is equally valid when considering the repeal of laws criminalizing conduct that has no discernible impact on public safety.
5. Simply stated, office pools, NCAA Tournament Brackets, and the like are not a detriment to public safety. But they do criminalize activities engaged in by numerous and otherwise law-abiding Rhode Islanders, with the attendant costs of investigation, enforcement, and potentially prosecution. Therefore, the repeal of these prohibitions as provided for in this legislation is warranted.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? CONCERNS?

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