

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H-8115, H-8116, AND H-8117
Before the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee

Submitted by: Marissa Mitchner (Her Majesty)
March 24, 2026

Honorable Members of the Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee,

I respectfully submit this written testimony in strong support of the following bills presently before you:

- H-8115 – Establishing body camera policies for correctional facilities
- H-8116 – The Body Cameras for Correctional Facilities Act (pilot program, oversight, and training)
- H-8117 – Expanding access to free communication and in-person visits for incarcerated individuals
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I am the Godmother of Willie Washington Jr. My Godson was the victim of medical neglect at the Cranston Adult Correctional Institution; Medium Security. He passed away the day I was featured on Studio 10 for my business. Today, we continue to inquire about the circumstances surrounding his death. With the enactment of H-8115 and H-8116 we are better able to determine the nature of interactions between inmates and correctional officers. Correctional officers have a history of reported brutality across the nation and world. The Rhode Island Department of Corrections is faulty. These measures are not merely administrative reforms. They are necessary corrections toward justice—rooted in safety, transparency, accountability, and the preservation of human dignity for all individuals within our correctional system, including both staff and the incarcerated.

I. DUTY OF PUBLIC SERVANTS UNDER LAW

As elected officials, you are entrusted with authority derived from the people. This authority is not absolute; it is bounded by the principles set forth in the United States Constitution, the Rhode Island Constitution, and foundational principles of justice that recognize inherent human dignity. Public office is not a position of dominion, but of service. The people of Rhode Island have entrusted you to ensure that every person—regardless of their circumstances—is treated with fairness, humanity, and respect under the law.

II. CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS FOR REFORM

The reforms proposed in these bills align directly with constitutional protections, including:

- Eighth Amendment (U.S. Constitution) – Prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment
- Fourteenth Amendment – Guaranteeing due process and equal protection under the law
- Rhode Island Constitution, Article I – Securing individual rights and protections against abuse of government power

Unchecked authority within correctional facilities or any state agencies creates conditions prepared for constitutional violations. Without transparency, misconduct can flourish in silence. Without accountability, harm can become normalized.

Body cameras and oversight mechanisms, as proposed in H-8115 and H-8116, provide essential tools to safeguard both correctional officers and incarcerated individuals. These measures ensure that truth is documented, disputes are fairly evaluated, and justice is not left to speculation.

III. TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY: A NECESSITY, NOT A LUXURY

The use of body cameras in correctional settings is a reasonable and necessary extension of modern accountability standards already implemented in law enforcement.

H-8115 and H-8116 will:

- Create objective records of interactions
- Protect staff from false allegations
- Deter abuse and misconduct
- Promote professionalism and integrity within facilities

Transparency does not undermine authority—it legitimizes it.

IV. HUMAN DIGNITY AND FAMILY CONNECTION (H-8117)

H-8117 recognizes a fundamental truth: incarceration is a deprivation of liberty—not of humanity.

Access to communication and in-person visitation:

- Strengthens family bonds
- Reduces recidivism
- Supports mental and emotional stability
- Reinforces rehabilitation over degradation

Denying meaningful contact with loved ones imposes unnecessary suffering that extends beyond the individual to families and communities. Justice must not become cruelty by another name. This form of detention is psychologically damaging. It mimics the intentions of psychological warfare and domestic terrorism. The methods used to subdue inmates is marginally familiar with war tactics. This does not teach re-enter. It dehumanizes individuals and potentially damages them beyond refinement.

V. THE DANGERS OF ABUSE OF POWER

History and lived experience alike demonstrate that when individuals are “deemed” inferior—whether by status, circumstance, race, or institutional labeling—systems can devolve into environments where abuse is tolerated or ignored.

This is neither lawful nor moral.

The Uniform Commercial Code, while governing commercial interactions, reflects a broader legal principle: good faith, fair dealing, and accountability are essential in all structured relationships.

Government, above all, must operate under these principles.

When power is exercised without oversight, it risks becoming oppression and subjugation. When people are stripped of dignity, it erodes the moral authority of the institution itself.

VI. MORAL AND BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

The principles underlying these reforms are not only legal—they are moral.

Scripture affirms the inherent worth of every human being:

- “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)
- “Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them.” (Hebrews 13:3)
- “There is neither slave nor free... for you are all one.” (Galatians 3:28)

These teachings emphasize justice, mercy, and the rejection of hierarchies that devalue human life. The Constitution itself reflects these foundational truths—that all are created equal and endowed with inherent rights.

VII. CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION

The passage of H-8115, H-8116, and H-8117 represents a commitment to:

- Upholding constitutional protections
- Ensuring transparency in government operations

- Preventing abuse of power
- Affirming the dignity of every human being

You are called, as public servants, to act not in convenience, but in conscience.

These bills provide a path forward—one that aligns law with justice, authority with accountability, and policy with humanity.

I urge you to support and advance these measures without hesitation.

Respectfully submitted,
Without Recourse

*Marissa Mitchner *VC**

Marissa Mitchner

(Domestic Violence: Psychological Abuse SURVIVOR)

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