



RHODE ISLAND BROTHERHOOD OF CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

"Representing Those Who Work the Toughest Beat in the State"

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Chair and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I write to express the Rhode Island Brotherhood of Correctional Officers serious concerns regarding H 7134, the proposed Rhode Island First Step Act.

While the goals of rehabilitation, reentry support, education, and recidivism reduction are important, this legislation raises substantial concerns regarding sentence modification, prerelease placement, and community safety.

The bill authorizes sentence reductions based upon "extraordinary and compelling reasons" and permits modification for certain elderly inmates who have served two-thirds of their sentence. My concern is that these standards, if not clearly defined and narrowly applied, may be vulnerable to inconsistent interpretation or abuse. Any release decision must be based on objective risk assessment, documented institutional behavior, offense history, victim considerations, and clear evidence that the individual does not pose a threat to public safety.

The bill also authorizes substantial sentence credits of up to one-hundred twenty days per year and allows significant periods of prerelease custody, including home confinement and community-based placement. Without clear safeguards, there is concern that individuals who continue to present a risk could be released into the community prematurely. Public safety must remain the first consideration.

Before expanding release mechanisms, the General Assembly should require clear outcome data on recidivism, technical violations, absconding rates, and reoffending among similarly situated populations. Policy should be guided by measurable results and strong risk controls. Reentry support is important, but it must not come at the expense of community safety.

I respectfully urge careful review and strengthening of the bill's release criteria and public safety protections.

Sincerely,

Richard Ferruccio

President

Rhode Island Brotherhood of Correctional Officers