

To: House Judiciary Committee, Rhode Island General Assembly

Date: April 2, 2026

RE: SUPPORT for H7204 – Relating to Criminal Procedure – Expungement of Criminal Records

Dear Chairperson McEntee, Vice Chair Knight, and the members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Brenda Plante, and I am a resident of Providence. I am writing to you today as a proud member of Black & Pink, an organization dedicated to supporting and advocating for LGBTQ+ individuals impacted by the criminal justice system. I am writing to strongly urge your support for H7204.

For the last 20 years, I have stayed out of trouble and focused on giving back to my community. I currently work for Weber Renew, a nonprofit in Providence where we provide essential resources and support to people experiencing homelessness. I am also enrolled in the senior community employment program at the department of labor and training. In my daily work, I see firsthand how people can change their lives when given the right tools and a fair chance. Despite my two decades of success, I still carry multiple non-violent felony convictions from my past. Under current law, I am unable to have these records expunged, even though I have proven my commitment to being a productive, law-abiding citizen. These old records remain a shadow over the life I have built and specifically are barriers to securing housing which has made it very difficult for me to find an apartment.

Beyond my professional work, I spend my time serving the community—such as cleaning up our local streets during "Care For The Square" projects or supporting my neighbors who are struggling with addiction and homelessness. I have done the work to move forward, yet the law has not caught up to my reality.

H7204 would allow people like me, who have completed their sentences and remained crime-free for over 10 years, to finally clear their names. This isn't just about a piece of paper; it's about dignity and removing the barriers that prevent us from fully participating in our communities.

I ask you to please vote YES on H7204. Thank you for your time and for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,
Brenda Plante
Providence, Rhode Island