

Rhode Island House Judiciary Committee  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

April 2, 2026

Re: Testimony in Support of House Bill 7652, an act relating to criminal procedure – sentence and execution

Dear Chairperson McEntee and members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Alice Hamblett. I was born and raised in Barrington, Rhode Island, and I am an alumnus of Brown University (2017) and Brown University's School of Public Health (2020).

I am submitting testimony in strong support of House Bill 7652, sponsored by Representative Cherie Cruz. My advocacy for this bill is grounded both in my care for the Rhode Island community and my public health background. Specifically, as a public health graduate student, I helped lead a project called "Keeping Families Together". This project included focus groups with Rhode Island parents with dual involvement in the criminal justice and child welfare systems and the creation of online self-advocacy resources. Project participants consistently attested to how devastating and destabilizing separation can be for parents, children, and their communities.

House Bill 7652 would ensure the potential impact of parental incarceration on children's well-being is considered in sentencing, and thus provide key opportunities to mitigate the known, harmful effects of criminal justice system involvement and family separation on Rhode Islanders.

The [2025 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook](#) indicates that, as of September 30, 2024, there were 1,586 parents incarcerated in Rhode Island with a total of 3,994 children. Research has long demonstrated the detrimental impact of parental incarceration on children. For example, many negative [effects include](#) low educational achievement, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and housing instability. This is unsurprising; children rely on parents and caregivers for financial, physical, emotional, educational, and numerous other types of critical support. Parental incarceration is also considered an [Adverse Childhood Experience \(ACE\)](#) and, as such, is associated with long-term physical, mental, and behavioral health issues.

The consideration of parental responsibility in sentencing is particularly important for justice-involved mothers and their children. According to the [Prison Policy Initiative](#), 80% of women in jail and 58% of women in prison are mothers, and most are the primary caretakers of their children. Not only do their children experience the anguish of separation, as described in an

article published by the [American Bar Association](#), “incarcerated women are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and trauma, largely because of the rupture in their familial relationships.” In addition, “the loss of the maternal role and the inability to care for their children while incarcerated leads many mothers to experience a deep sense of alienation from their own families and communities.” House Bill 7652 is one way to prevent the fracturing of mother-child and community relationships caused by incarceration.

Notably, this is also a racial justice issue, as incarceration [disproportionately impacts](#) Rhode Islanders of color and their families due to factors such as overpolicing and the systemic underresourcing of communities. For example, per a 2021 [report by the Sentencing Project](#), in Rhode Island, Black people are imprisoned at a rate of 821 per 100,000, and Latinx people are imprisoned at a rate of 329 per 100,000. Meanwhile, white people are imprisoned at a rate of 131 per 100,000. All children and families in Rhode Island deserve the chance to thrive. Parental incarceration, and the inequity it perpetuates, jeopardizes that chance.

With House Bill 7652, the Legislature can reduce parental incarceration and ultimately help to ensure the long-term health and well-being of Rhode Island children and families who are impacted by the criminal justice system. I urge the Committee to vote in favor of this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alice Hamblett

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