

**Dear Chairwoman McEntee, Vice Chairman Knight and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,**

**Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE)**

**In Support of H-7079, H-7204, H-7281, H-7508, H-7651, H-7205, H-7820, H-8083, H-8084, H-8085, and H-8275**

**April 2nd, 2026,**

Dear Chairwoman McEntee, Vice Chair Knight and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE), a grassroots organization that has organized low-income families in Rhode Island for 40 years for economic, political, and social justice are in strong support of the above bills being heard on April 2nd, 2026 in the House Judiciary Committee.

We write in strong support of this comprehensive package of legislation, which collectively moves Rhode Island toward a more fair, humane, and effective justice system. These bills recognize a fundamental truth: people should not be defined by past mistakes, and our laws should reflect the possibility of growth, accountability, and second chances.

At the center of this package is **H-7508, the Rhode Island Clean Slate Act**, which we believe is truly transformative.

Automatic expungement ensures that relief reaches everyone who qualifies—not just those who can afford legal assistance or successfully navigate a complex and often confusing court process. Every day at DARE, we work with individuals who are eligible for expungement but remain burdened by their records simply because of barriers like cost, lack of information, or difficulty accessing legal help.

The Clean Slate Act removes those barriers. It promotes efficiency, equity, and fairness by making the system work as intended—automatically. It allows people to access employment, housing, and education without being held back by records they are already legally eligible to clear. Most importantly, it ensures that second chances are not reserved for the few, but available to all.

We can say with confidence: this bill would change lives.

The additional bills in this package build on that vision:

- **H-7079, H-7204, H-8083, and H-7820** expand access to expungement for individuals with multiple convictions and recognize that rehabilitation happens over time—even across decades.

- **H-7281, H-8084, and H-8085** reduce waiting periods and address lower-level offenses, ensuring that minor or old mistakes do not create lifelong barriers.
- **H-7651 (Probation & Bail Reform)** promotes fairness by limiting unnecessary incarceration for technical violations and supporting stability in people's lives.
- **H-7205 (Sentencing Reconsideration)** acknowledges that people grow and deserve meaningful opportunities for review and second chances.
- **H-8275 (Restrictive Confinement Oversight Act)** brings needed transparency and accountability to the use of solitary confinement, ensuring dignity and humane treatment.

Together, these bills represent a comprehensive approach to justice—one that balances accountability with opportunity, and punishment with the possibility of redemption.

Everyday at DARE we see how old records and overly punitive policies keep people locked out of jobs, housing, and stability. These barriers do not make our communities safer—they make it harder for people to succeed. When people have access to opportunity, our communities are stronger and safer.

Rhode Island has the opportunity to lead with bold, common-sense reforms that reflect our shared values of fairness, dignity, and second chances.

We respectfully urge the Committee to pass this full package of legislation, and especially to advance the Clean Slate Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Direct Action for Rights and Equality