



April 2, 2026

Representative Carol Hagan McEntee, Chair

House Judiciary

Rhode Island State House

Providence, RI 02903

RE: H7820

Dear Chairwoman McEntee and Honorable Committee Members:

I am writing in support of House Bill H-7820, sponsored by Representative Lima.

This bill provides an opportunity for individuals with convictions from over 40 years ago to clear their records. At that point, individuals have demonstrated decades of living beyond their past. Continuing to carry a record after such a long period serves little public safety purpose and instead prolongs unnecessary barriers.

Rhode Island Communities for Addiction Recovery Efforts (RICARES) is a non-profit dedicated to advancing addiction recovery in Rhode Island through advocacy, community engagement, and service. For many Rhode Islanders in recovery, the path forward does not end when a person stops using substances or completes treatment. Recovery is a life-long process that requires stability, opportunity, and connection. Policies that remove unnecessary barriers help people build what we call recovery capital – the internal and external resources that support sustained recovery. Recovery capital can include safe housing, employment opportunities, supportive relationships, education, and access to recovery services. Unfortunately, a criminal record often blocks access to many of these essential resources, even long after a person has turned their life around. Barriers to housing, employment, and education can keep members of our community trapped in cycles of instability that make recovery more difficult to attain.

Policies like H7820 do more than correct inequity; they strengthen communities, strengthen long-term recovery outcomes, and help individuals avoid future involvement with the justice system. A past mistake does not have to permanently limit a person's ability to build a healthy, productive life.

I respectfully urge the committee to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Garcia

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