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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Hon. Carol Hagan McEntee, Chairperson, House Committee on Judiciary,  
et al. sitting Judiciary Committee Members, Rhode Island General Assembly

Amnesty International USA Local Group 1016  
ITEM: H7651  
POSITION: SUPPORT

To The Esteemed Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

Thank you for considering House Bill 7651, which seeks to create a more restorative environment in our State for those among us who have “paid their debt to society.” It is Amnesty USA 1016’s position that there can be a balance between protecting society from recidivists vis-a-vis suspending ex-offenders full due process rights.

Once we have removed so-called “32F Violations” from our criminal procedures, Rhode Island will meaningfully remove one of the single greatest barriers to basic human rights (housing, livelihood, education, etc.) for tens of thousands of our beloved neighbors. As many are testifying today and in previous years, when this Bill is law communities will benefit from increased social welfare measures, because mothers and fathers will be able to stay in their jobs and families and social networks despite a traffic stop or similar interaction with the criminal justice system.

This legislation is a solid step in the direction away from a carceral system based on racist concepts of the inherent criminality of the working classes; and towards a system that prioritizes the power of individuals and their communities to become whole again.

As has been mentioned by many observers, criminal sentences that have been served and put in an individual’s past all too often restrict their present or future opportunities, welfare, or liberty. This is unjust. They may have done a crime, but they also, by definition of being back in society, have done their time. Additional burdens are no different from extra time in a sentence that no

judge or parole board can prevent or remove. Misdemeanors or nonviolent felony offenses for some have been an opportunity for reflection, growth, and a new approach to participating in society. They should have a clear expectation of continued benefits that come with good time outside. Any misgiving about what this bill seeks to affect indicates a gross misunderstanding of our criminal justice system and specifically the ways that retribution and rehabilitation are intended to work for the individual and society.

**Amnesty International USA 1016 urges the Committee to consider this bill favorably** and immediately send it to the House floor recommending passage.