

Ariana Costa

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To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: H7651 testimony

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Dear Chairperson McEntee and members of the committee:

My name is Danielle Lefebvre. I am here to express my strong support for H7651, which seeks to create a fairer process for individuals accused of probation violations under Rule 32F. Though I have not been violated myself, after recently serving 11 years in the Rhode Island ACI, I saw the damage Rule 32F has caused first hand. We are the smallest state in the country yet we have the 2nd highest rate of adults on probation. That is an extremely large number of people who are always at the risk of being violated even though no new crime is being committed.

About 30% of the incarcerated population at any given time are serving time on violations and that it too many lives being impacted by old laws that need to be repealed.

Currently, individuals accused of probation violations can be held in detention for long periods without charges before their hearings, often with no opportunity to return to their families, jobs, housing, or treatment. This situation can result in the loss of employment, custody of children, and stable housing, even before any violation is proven. This bill would help restore due process, ensuring that detention is not the automatic response to a probation violation.

This proposal is important because it balances public safety with fairness, requiring courts to consider specific factors such as the nature of the violation, the individual's probation history, criminal record, and potential risk to public safety before making decisions about detention or bail. By providing a more individualized approach, the bill recognizes that not every violation warrants automatic detention. People should have the opportunity to remain in the community, especially when they are making efforts to comply with their supervision. Detaining individuals without bail before their case is heard only punishes them prematurely, making it harder for them to succeed. I urge the committee to pass [Bill Number] to ensure that Rhode Island's probation system is fair, effective, and grounded in due process.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Danielle Lefebvre