

Ariana Costa

From: E Z <zahniser.ellen@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2026 11:54 AM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Pass BAIL ON 32 (H7651) without further delay

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Dear Chairperson Representative McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Ellen Zahniser, and I am a resident of Providence. I am writing to urge the House Judiciary Committee to pass BAIL ON 32 (H7651) without further delay.

Rhode Island's probation system is one of the harshest in the country. Our state has the second-highest probation rate in the United States, and people accused of probation violations are often incarcerated for weeks while waiting for a hearing, even when the alleged violation would not normally result in jail time. These unnecessary detentions can cause people to lose their jobs, housing, and stability, even if the violation is ultimately dismissed. They also contribute significantly to incarceration at the ACI—about 30% of all pretrial admissions are alleged probation violators.

I have personally heard countless stories from individuals whose lives were ruined by being held without bail for extended periods of time for alleged probation violations, in cases where they ended up being completely exonerated of any wrongdoing! This system is inefficient, unjust, unfairly punitive, expensive, and absurd.

I trust our judges to make the right call in cases of alleged probation violations, but I also believe that it is our duty to legally codify guidelines that will ensure just and fair treatment of all Rhode Islanders. This is NOT an overreach - it is the government's job.

Our probation system is also costly for taxpayers. According to the Rhode Island Department of Corrections, incarceration costs over \$250 per person per day, meaning reforming Rule 32 could save Rhode Islanders nearly \$24 million each year.

BAIL ON 32 (H7651) would create a fairer process by requiring courts to presume release for most probation violations, set reasonable bail or non-monetary conditions, require prompt hearings, and ensure written justification for detention.

This reform would help protect due process, reduce unnecessary incarceration, and make our justice system more efficient.

I respectfully urge you to pass BAIL ON 32 (H7651) without further delay.

Sincerely,
Ellen Zahniser
Providence