

April 20th, 2026

House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Testimony in Support of H-7651

My name is Sophia de los Reyes and I am a resident of Providence. I am in favor of Representative Batista's bill H-7651 that would prevent unnecessary jail time for those accused of probation violations.

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.

Probation sentences are unduly long and are a source of constant anxiety for individuals because they carry the threat of jail time if/when accused of technical violations of probation. The threat of incarceration also coerces people into plea deals and longer probation sentences. These violations of probation are often not violent and do not warrant jail time, let alone the loss of property, employment, and/or custody of children while incarcerated, especially when the violation is ultimately dismissed. Detaining individuals at the ACI for multiple days at a time while in the process of sorting out a misunderstanding/accusation is extreme, and since these violations are non-violent, it is more logical, practical (less costly for the state), and ethical to allow bail for these individuals.

We should be working to prevent incarceration in our state, not promote it with technical violations that carry such harsh consequences. 66% of probationers earn less than \$20,000. We should instead invest in the community, with education and job training programs, so that everyone, including those on probation, has the opportunity to earn more.

Bail on 32 (H-7651) 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 urge you to consider these points in favor of Representative Batista's bill H-7651.

Sincerely,
Sophia de los Reyes