

To the members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Emma Gauthier, and I am a resident of Providence (SD 5, Bell/HD 7, Morales) and the Volunteer Lobbyist for The Womxn Project. I am writing to you today in **support of H6637** Relating to Criminal Offenses - Sexual Assault.

This bill would codify what should already exist as a legal standard; detainees or those in police custody should *never* be subject to sexual abuse or rape from “peace officers.” We should *always* hold perpetrators of sexual assault accountable, regardless of their peace officer status.

It’s common sense that those detained or under arrest are legally incapable of consenting to sexual acts with peace officers who hold enormous power over them. We can *never* tolerate predators in any profession.

Unfortunately, this type of abuse is widespread and Rhode Island is not immune. As recently as January 6th of 2021, a correctional officer at the [ACI in Cranston](#) is facing numerous charges after an investigation revealed he was having sex with an inmate. [A study](#) from 2017 showed that 1,219 officers across the country were arrested for sex-related crimes from 2005 to 2012.

Alone, the numbers are staggering. Still, we may never know how many peace officers commit sex-related crimes on the job because of the fear, shame, and crushing stigma that society places on victims of sexual assault. It’s likely that the actual numbers are much higher.

Passing H6637 will help end the systemic abuse happening in our criminal justice system. It will provide real consequences to officers who abuse their power and take advantage of their positions. It will show victims of sexual assault that we hear them, and that we believe their stories.

I urge you to do your part in helping end the systemic abuse happening in our state. Please vote **YES on H6637** to extend custodial sexual assault consequences to predators who hide behind their badges.

Sincerely,
Emma Gauthier

The Womxn Project
Volunteer Lobbyist
emma.gauthier@thewomxnproject.org
(508) 648-8180