

## Roberta DiMezza

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**From:** Laurel Leake <laurelleake@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 7, 2021 7:21 PM  
**To:** Rep. Craven, Robert E.; Rep. McEntee, Carol Hagan; Rep. Knight, Jason; Rep. Ajello, Edith H.; Rep. Batista, Jose F.; Rep. Bennett, David A.; Rep. Caldwell, Justine A.; Rep. Casimiro, Julie A.; Rep. Corvese, Arthur J.; Rep. Felix, Leonela; Rep. Lombardi, John J.; Rep. Noret, Thomas E.; Rep. Place, David J.; Rep. Roberts, Sherry; Rep. Vella-Wilkinson, Camille  
**Cc:** Roberta DiMezza  
**Subject:** Vote yes on H6049: Stop sexually predatory police

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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To the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Laurel Leake, and I am a resident of Providence, RI, living in District 1 (Rep David Cicilline) and Ward 2 (Helen Anthony). I am writing to you today in support of House bill 6049, which would finally allow us to charge "peace officers" (police officers, COs, probation officers, etc) for sexually assaulting and raping people in their custody. It is common sense that those who are 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 - however, as the examples below demonstrate, police departments again and again go to extraordinary lengths to protect the predators in their midst.**

1. Police departments across the USA and in our own state of RI have proven themselves willing to lie and cover up the crimes of their co-workers rather than protect the rest of us from rape and sexual abuse. [This 2017 study](#) reveals that at least 1,219 officers were arrested in the USA for sex-related crimes from 2005 through 2012, with more than half of the victims being minors, and 17% of the officers being repeat offenders who were allowed to keep their positions of power. This is merely scratching the surface, however - the data obviously does not include sexual assaults victims did not report out of fear of police retaliation, or where officers covered up their co-workers' crimes and prevented cases going to court.
2. [This 2019 study found nearly half of all child and adult sex trafficking victims in Hawai'i were further abused by police officers.](#) This abuse is rampant through all 50 states, where sex workers and survivors of sex trafficking are attacked, coerced, and threatened into sexual acts by POs who could imprison or even kill them.
3. In our own state of RI, [a former dispatcher accused Central Falls' Detective Omar Ospina of sexual assault, and the entire department \(incl. Chief Barzykowski and Sergeant Tougas\) for participating in and/or covering up years of racist sexual harassment.](#) The police department fired the dispatcher for filing her claim, and did not discipline the officers or charge them for any crimes - even after they lied during a tax-payer funded investigation, and even though Detective Ospina and Officer Genaro Ruiz have a documented history of sexual misconduct and brutality towards the people of RI since 2007.
4. Central Falls' police department made clear with these actions that they choose to use our public funds to protect their staff from any repercussions for their actions over protecting the people of RI from potential sexual predators. [The alleged victim had to submit a public petition to Mayor James Diosa for an independent investigation once the police declared themselves innocent.](#)
5. In 2017, [former Narragansett police officer Matthew Riley was charged for knowingly sending pornography to a 15-year-old child.](#) Less than a week after a police raid that turned up hard proof of his sexual predation, [the Narragansett police department allowed him to retire with a planned pension of \\$2.5 million paid for by the people of RI.](#) Although the courts later forced them to revoke this pension, once again RI police proved that when faced with investigating their own officers and holding them accountable, they choose to instead protect and reward them financially, with no concern given to their past and potential future victims.
6. [In 2019, a man accused a Woonsocket police officer of sexual assault and forcible rape.](#) When officers arrived at the scene, they did not pursue the accused officer or charge him with a crime, instead choosing to handcuff the alleged victim's partner and throw him in the back of a squad car before eventually releasing him. Their justification was that he had insulted the police officers, which Woonsocket police apparently considers a crime, and one more serious than rape. Their vague promises of "an investigation" have so far proved empty - the victim

withdrew his complaint after the police forced his partner into their car, arguably a case of purposeful intimidation. And in fact, as the law stands now, the alleged victim's partner would have no right to take the officers to court if they had also sexually assaulted him in the process of roughing him up.

It's abundantly obvious that police in RI and across the country have a dangerous degree of freedom to use their positions of power to sexual abuse and rape the rest of us with no form of legal recourse or protections in place, and in fact use our public funds to get away with their crimes. Bill 0317 makes clear what should always be the legal standard - that police should never be allowed to sexually abuse and rape the people they detain and imprison.

**Therefore, we ask that not only you vote YES on H 6049, but add an amendment expanding this right to anyone under investigation by police, not just people in custody.**

Please protect the people of RI from sexual assault and vote YES on H6049. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Laurel Leake  
[laurreleake@gmail.com](mailto:laurreleake@gmail.com)