

Call Off Your Old
Tired Ethics



February 6th, 2023

Dear RI House STATE GOVT/ELECTIONS Committee:

COYOTE RI is writing you today in support of House Bill No. [5127](#) ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT-- CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT {LC407/1} (Directs the department of corrections to collect information from individuals entering its custody: sex, race, nativity (country of origin), religion, and level of education.

Not only is racking this data important. It's just as important to understand the outcomes of those incarcerated at the ACI. Upon doing some research last summer, we were shocked that the cost of housing someone at the RI ACI is 187k a year. We were also surprised by the number of women being incarcerated over and over again, for petty misdemeanors that are often poverty offenses. So when someone is sentenced to 90 days for shoplifting it costs 46,750 to incarcerate them for 90 days. These funds could be diverted to create low-income housing and other public services that could interrupt the repeated cycle of incarceration.

In November 2022 COYOTE RI started a program to help the women being released from the ACI. We found that there is no release planning taking place unless the women are sentenced and have 10 to 90 days left on their sentence. Many of the women are at the ACI for 2 or 3 months and then they go to court and are released. So they are released without a birth certificate or social security card because they didn't get an opportunity to meet with the ACI Transitional services dept. Therefore many are released and become homeless.

COYOTE RI's new re-entry program assists women with getting their documents so they can get a state ID, which they need to apply for jobs, SNAP, Medicaid, and other public services. We also provide them a clothing and food allowance as many of these women have no resources and nowhere to go. We also work with House of Hope to help women access sober houses or other safe housing options.

We are also concerned with the lack of educational opportunities for incarcerated people at the ACI, as well as the fact that the ACI still doesn't have WiFi so incarcerated people do not have access to JPay or Securustech so they are not able to communicate with their families and support systems unless they have money to make phone calls.

Tracking data is important to better understand how laws are applied and who they are applied to, as well as to understand outcomes, and how we can reduce the incarceration rate in Rhode Island.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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