

March 10, 2026

Dear Chair LaMountain and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Anusha Alles. I am a Cranston resident writing in support of passing S2161, or BAIL ON 32. As you know, this is the sixth year that the bill is being heard, and organizers have made significant changes to the language addressing this body's concerns. I urge you to push this important legislation to a floor vote without further delay.

We know the facts: RI's criminal legal system is neither effective nor just. Despite being the smallest state, RI has the 4th highest recidivism rate in the country, with roughly half of our population reentering the system after release. This makes complete sense: the majority of people on probation are automatically denied bail in RI courts before being given any opportunity to contest a violation; on average, Rhode Islanders are held far longer than 10 days at the ACI without opportunity for a hearing, which means that many are forced to sign pleas rather than exercise their right to defend themselves. This is coercion, not justice.

We know the impact: the gap between RI's rich and poor is widening, with the constant cycle of probation, violation, and incarceration disrupting our community members' access to stable income, housing, job training and other educational opportunities. The trauma of incarceration ranges from substance use relapse to illness and even death due to medical neglect behind the walls. Our children and our communities experience the effects, from the sudden loss of parents to the financial insecurity created in our homes. RI's probation system is indisputably a risk to the public.

This body has repeatedly opposed BAIL ON 32 on the grounds that it infringes upon judicial discretion. Current bill language addresses this concern; with the exception of low-level substance use charges, judges retain their ability to assess risk to the public and hold alleged violators if they deem necessary. In practice, BAIL ON 32 currently requires only that judges assess risk to the public in a more comprehensive manner. How will detaining an individual could cause harm to that person or to others? Is the individual elderly or sick? Would incarceration remove a parent from their child? Judges must additionally note their arguments in writing, as a measure of accountability and transparency to the alleged violator and the larger public.

These are basic measures, and only enforce the high level of seriousness and consideration with which judges should already be approaching the decision to incarcerate any member of our community.

Again, I urge you to pass this bill without further delay.

Sincerely,  
Anusha Alles