

Support for S2161

March 9, 2026

Dear Chairman LaMountain and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my support for 2161, Bail on 32. The bill is designed to remove one of the many obstacles faced by those seeking to make a fresh start, while still retaining sanctions on others. I'll highlight an example that particularly resonated with me.

Here's part one of the story: Last winter, members of our church were volunteering at local homeless shelters. This included providing rides when the shelters closed at 7:00am. One morning, two men asked their volunteer driver to drop them off at Butler Hospital so they could begin drug treatment. It did not occur to the volunteer that if he was stopped by the police, he might be immediately sent to jail if any illegal substances were found on his passengers. He was not on parole, so he would not be incarcerated unless he was proven guilty of wrongdoing. He was able to help others in need.

Here's the other part: Last spring, I attended a press conference in support of this bill that included testimony from a man who had trained as a peer drug counselor. He explained that he was too fearful to work in that field because of the potential consequence if he was found to be near someone in possession. If accused of a parole violation, he could spend 10-14 days in jail – unable to care for his child, risking the loss of his job, and any security he had established. His exit from this field is a personal loss of his aspiration for a fulfilling career. It is also a loss to our community – for those he could have helped, since counselors with lived experience are often the most effective recovery coaches.

The juxtaposition of these two narratives illustrates just one of the injustices in this flawed system. I know this is just one of the examples you will hear. I urge you to recommend S2161 for passage.

Sincerely,
Kate McGovern
Providence, RI