
Testimony in Support of S2161, S2711, S2299, and S2313

From Rachel <rachelbish91@gmail.com>

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To Senate Judiciary Committee <SenateJudiciary@rilegislature.onmicrosoft.com>

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Dear Chairperson Senator LaMountain and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Rachel Bishop, and I am a resident of North Providence and a nurse. I am writing to express my strong support for S2161, S2711, S2299, and S2313.

As I know you've heard for years, Rhode Island's probation system is broken. Once on probation it can be hard to avoid violating- a missed appointment or being in the wrong place at the wrong time can land folks in jail. Under the current system, judges deny bail to $\frac{2}{3}$ of people accused of violating their probation. Even if someone's violation is minor or they are innocent of the accused charge, they are now locked up and too often lose their homes, their jobs, their kids. Fear of these consequences forces far too many people in this state into plea deals. Coerced justice is not justice. The people most likely to be on probation are those most vulnerable to being targeted or profiled by police- unhoused people and poor people of color- and they suffer the most from this system. It gives police ability to target someone for punishment if they know is on probation, even if that person isn't actually guilty of any new crime. As an advocate with RI Homeless Advocacy Project, I know this happens all the time. As a nurse, I see the cumulative impacts of repeated incarceration on my sick patients. There is ample precedent for the legislature putting guidance on judicial discretion, and guidance is clearly needed. I urge you to support **S2161 – Bail on 32**.

I also strongly support the Clean Slate Initiative bills S2711, S2299, and S2313, which would improve Rhode Island's expungement process and create meaningful second chances for people who have completed their sentences and demonstrated rehabilitation.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to support and pass S2161, S2711, S2299, and S2313.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rachel Bishop

Sent from my iPhone