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

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

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

My name is Karen Rosenberg, and I am a resident of Cranston as well as the chair of the grassroots group Cranston Forward.

I write to support S2161, S2711, S2299, and S2313, bills that will help prevent unnecessary incarceration and reform criminal record expungement rules to allow formerly incarcerated people to reintegrate into and become productive members of society.

S2161 – Bail on 32

S2161 would create a presumption of eligibility for release for probation violations where there exists a genuine risk or danger, requires prompt hearings and written findings in cases where release is denied, and prescribes reasonable bail or non-monetary conditions of release.

Rhode Island has one of the harshest probation systems in the country, often causing individuals accused of probation violations to be deprived of their freedom for weeks without bail, while awaiting a hearing to prove their innocence, during which time they will lose jobs and housing, even in cases where the alleged violation would not normally result in jail time. This system is unjust and counterproductive. It causes needless harm to families and is a waste of taxpayer money. It is long past time for sensible reforms to ensure that due process rights are protected and detention is only used where it is really necessary.

Clean Slate Initiative Bills

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.

S2711 would replace the current cumbersome, confusing and expensive process with automatic expungement for eligible conviction records.

S2299 would allow for expungement of many non-violent felony convictions ten years after sentence completion. People who have lived law-abiding lives for years should at some point be able to move on with their lives and not be permanently defined by past mistakes.

S2313 would shorten the waiting period for expungement eligibility for various categories of offenses after prescribed waiting periods, reflecting the reality that individuals who remain conviction-free in such cases are highly unlikely to reoffend and deserve a fair chance at a job and housing.

Criminal records can create lifelong barriers to employment, housing, and education. These reforms will allow more Rhode Islanders a chance to support their families and to be contributing members of society.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Rosenberg
Cranston, RI.