

March 10, 2026

Dear Chair LaMountain and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Anusha Alles, and I am a Cranston resident. I hold seven years of experience in the criminal justice field, including employment at Direct Action for Rights and Equality and the national criminal justice organization Equal Justice USA. I am writing in support of three important expungement reforms: S2711, S2299, and S2313. Together, these reforms could remove lasting barriers for thousands of Rhode Islanders seeking jobs, education, housing, and employment after an encounter with the criminal legal system.

The gap between RI's rich and poor is widening. Systemic poverty is a well-established root cause of violence, and forces people to engage in criminalized survival behaviors. If we have any interest in public safety, we should support community members in accessing living wages, housing, and educational opportunities that might close the wealth gap.

Instead, we criminalize survival, and then weaponize criminal records as yet another obstacle to financial and social stability. Lifetime records trap people—often from a very young age—in precarity and exclusion. No matter how hard an individual might try to improve their circumstances or take accountability for past harms, records create insurmountable barriers. Our children and our communities experience the effects for generations.

This is not a rehabilitative system, but one that enforces systemic poverty and encourages recidivism.

Expungement reform is only a fraction of what is needed to create safe, healthy communities. Increasing expungement access can interrupt the cycles of criminalization and poverty; it will not uproot it. Nevertheless, it remains a vital step in redressing decades of mass incarceration and its impacts on our communities. I urge you to pass these common sense reforms without delay.

Sincerely,
Anusha Alles