

To: Senator Matthew LaMountain, Chair, and members of the RI Senate Judiciary Committee

Re: Testimony in Support of Senate Bills 2161, Criminal Procedure, Sentence and Execution, and Expungement Bills S2299, S2313 and S2711

Date: March 10, 2026

My name is Bernie Beaudreau and I am writing in support of S2161, S2299, S2313 and S2711 which relate to Criminal Procedure, Sentencing, Execution and Expungement of criminal records. For many among the homeless community in Rhode Island, passage of these bills into law will remove an enormous obstacle and burden in their quest to find, and often keep, a decent and affordable home as well as gainful employment.

I understand from my volunteering work with the homeless and RI Homeless Advocacy Project and Direct Action for Rights and Equality (D.A.R.E.) that:

- Rhode Island's probation system is one of the harshest in the country. Our state has the second-highest probation rate in the United States, and
- People accused of probation violations are often incarcerated for weeks while waiting for a hearing, even when the alleged violation would not normally result in jail time.
- Unnecessary detentions can cause people **to lose their jobs, housing, and stability**, even if the violation is ultimately dismissed. They also contribute significantly to incarceration at the ACI—about 30% of all pretrial admissions are alleged probation violators.

According to D.A.R.E., this practice of unnecessary detentions is also costly for taxpayers. According to the Rhode Island Department of Corrections, incarceration costs over \$250 per person per day, meaning reforming Rule 32 could save Rhode Islanders nearly \$24 million each year.

This proposed legislation would create a fairer process by requiring courts to presume release for most probation violations, set reasonable bail or non-monetary conditions, require prompt hearings, and ensure written justification for detention. It would also give non-violent offenders a "clean slate" when applying for and keeping jobs, and meeting landlord requirements to attain housing.

This reform would help protect due process, reduce unnecessary incarceration, and make our justice system more efficient. Among other populations of ex-offenders that would benefit from this legislation, many of the homeless and near homeless who are on probation for minor offenses would be spared of losing their jobs and open up their rental housing opportunities.

I respectfully urge you to pass these bills without further delay.

Sincerely,

Bernie Beaudreau
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