



March 10, 2026

Re: S2711, The Rhode Island Clean Slate Act

Dear Chair LaMountain, Vice-Chair McKenney, Secretary Bissailon, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

The Responsible Business Initiative for Justice (RBIJ) is an award-winning nonprofit that works with companies to champion solutions that promote public safety, deliver justice, and strengthen communities. Since its inception, RBIJ has collaborated with companies of all sizes across two dozen states to advocate for practical policy reforms that expand workforce opportunities and stimulate economic growth. **Today, we proudly stand in support of the passage of S2711 (Clean Slate), legislation that is good for business, good for the economy, and good for Rhode Island.**

Approximately 300,000 Rhode Islanders have some form of a criminal record. For many, this poses an enormous obstacle to a person's employment, occupational licensing, housing, and educational prospects — all of which directly impact one's ability to earn a stable living and support themselves and their families. When it comes to employment, in particular, the obstacles are especially onerous: [nine in ten](#) employers currently use background checks to screen applicants, and having a record — even one that is extremely old or unrelated to the job — reduces an otherwise-qualified job seeker's chance of getting a callback [by nearly 50 percent](#).

While tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders are eligible to have their records sealed right now, the existing petition-based system is costly, complex, and time-consuming. In practice, that means that many Rhode Islanders are being denied the relief – and the economic opportunities – they deserve.

This has an enormous impact on Rhode Island's workforce and economy. As labor shortages persist, businesses of all sizes are struggling to fill open positions, with thousands more job vacancies than available workers. In Rhode Island, I've heard directly from local employers that they desperately need access to a wider talent pool. Excluding eligible workers just because they have an old criminal record is holding employers back.

Clean Slate would also save taxpayer dollars and strengthen our economy. The U.S. loses an estimated [\\$87 billion in GDP per year](#) due to the underemployment of formerly incarcerated people. Conversely, when people have their record sealed, their wages increase by an average of [22% within one year](#) — which means more money back into our economy.

By helping individuals with old criminal records get back into the workforce, we would also make Rhode Island safer. Stable employment is one of the most effective ways to reduce

The Responsible Business Initiative for Justice is the collective name for RBIJ USA (a fiscally sponsored project of NEO) and RBIJ UK (a non-profit community interest company (company number: 12100724))

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recidivism; without fair access to the workforce, individuals with records — and their families — are likely to become stuck in cycles of unemployment, poverty, and recidivism. We thank the sponsors of this important legislation and urge the legislature to pass The Rhode Island Clean Slate Act, S2711.

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