

March 10, 2026

Dear Chair LaMountain and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am a Cranston resident with incarcerated loved ones, and loved ones who have come home after decades behind the walls. 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 Senate Bill 2731, the Sentencing Reconsideration Act, which would establish a process for reevaluating prison sentences after ten years based on demonstrated rehabilitation, legal changes, or other compelling factors.

Given evidence that long-term incarceration causes profound, lasting physical and mental harm, it is imperative that Rhode Island create this opportunity for sentencing reevaluation. In the United States, each year a person spends incarcerated is linked with a two-year decline in life expectancy. Stress, abuse, poor nutrition, and medical neglect behind the walls can cause PTSD, chronic health conditions, and premature death. Longterm incarceration additionally has traumatic generational impacts, separating families and intensifying economic instability in communities already experiencing racial and economic oppression.

Most damning, we have no real justification for condemning people to such damaging prison sentences. They don't work. Research spanning several decades has established that lengthy prison sentences provide only a minimal deterrent effect to harmful behaviors; increased incarceration rates have had a negligible effect on crime reduction since 2000. Moreover, we know from survivors of violent crimes that punitive sentencing neither repairs harm nor addresses survivors' needs in the aftermath of violence.

Yet RI spends \$120K-260K each year, *per individual*, to lock people away. Imagine what we could fund with that money! We could support survivors in accessing trauma-informed services and achieving material stability. We could actually start addressing systemic poverty as a root cause of violence, instead of criminalizing behaviors that stem from it. We could fund our struggling public schools and afterschool programs, create employment opportunities, and build affordable housing.

This bill is a step toward a system that could reduce systemic and interpersonal harm in our communities—unlike our current system, which only compounds it. It is also a necessary step in redressing decades of racial injustice historically embedded in our policing and court systems. Black and brown people are over-represented in the prison population, and especially among those serving lengthy prison sentences. For incarcerated persons serving extreme prison sentences—specifically life without the possibility of parole—Black people are approximately 20% and Hispanic/Latino 28% of that population.

S2731 can by no means heal the devastating effects of extreme sentencing—from generational trauma to a widening wealth gap—particularly on Black and brown communities. However, it is a

crucial step in restoring our people (now aunties, uncles, grandparents, and elders) to their families and communities.

Sincerely,
Anusha Alles