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Senate Judiciary Committee

1 Capital Hill

Providence, RI 02901

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## Opposition to Bills S2731, S2711, S2299, S2162, and S2161

Dear Members of the Rhode Island Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Michael Lanowy and I am a lifetime Rhode Island resident. I am also a Correctional Officer with the Rhode Island Department of Corrections. I am in my 28<sup>th</sup> year and currently hold the rank of Captain. I have firsthand knowledge of the Criminal Justice system and the results of recent “reform” initiatives passed by this very body.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed bills being heard in your committee this week. While I acknowledge the need for improvements within the justice system, I believe that the current proposals could potentially undermine the voices and experiences of victims.

The essence of justice lies in not only protecting the rights of the accused but also ensuring that victims receive the recognition, support, and closure they rightfully deserve. Any reform that diminishes the severity of consequences for offenders’ risks silencing the very individuals who have already suffered and been wronged.

Victims of crime endure tremendous pain and hardship, often experiencing a profound sense of betrayal and violation. It is crucial that their voices remain at the forefront of any judicial process. They must be given an active role in proceedings, from the investigation and trial phases to sentencing and beyond. Their insights and testimonies are invaluable in achieving a balanced and fair outcome.

Moreover, reducing sentences or offering more lenient penalties conveys a message that society is more concerned with offenders than with securing justice for victims. This erodes public trust and confidence in the legal system, leading to a perception that crime victims are secondary in consideration.

Victims must already bear the burden of reliving their trauma when appearing before the Parole Board. Many of these bills will force that to happen far too soon and more often. The time for

justice is at sentencing. Parole in recent years is already too lenient as evidenced by many Judges now sentencing offenders to periods of incarceration with the stipulation that a portion is “non-parolable”. Any changes made to existing law must enhance, rather than undermine, the ability for victims to have their day in court and to feel that their suffering is being acknowledged and addressed.

In conclusion, I respectfully ask that you reconsider the proposed reforms and focus on measures that ensure a just and equitable system for all parties involved. By keeping the rights and voices of victims at the heart of the justice system, we can work toward a more fair and compassionate society.

I will be submitting further testimony on each individual bill and will be present at the state house for as many hearings as I can to convey my concerns.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Lanowy