

March 13, 2026

To the Chair and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is David Winoker, and I am the secretary of Rhode Island for Community & Justice ("RICJ"). I am writing in strong support of Bill S 2940, legislation that would strengthen Juvenile Hearing Boards (JHBs) across Rhode Island.

I have been involved with RICJ for many decades. I have served as president and am now secretary. My family's business is Belvoir Properties and has had a history of strong community involvement. I have personally seen the evolution of many youths go from a pressing, difficult environment, to interesting and highly productive citizens. Many have related how RICJ put them on a good path. The JHB's are a crucial component to continuing this critical community development source.

Thank you for your consideration of this important bill.

1. **It re-establishes a statewide JHB Coordinator through the Family Court.**

Our boards are run by dedicated volunteers doing incredible work with very little infrastructure support. A statewide coordinator will provide technical assistance across Rhode Island, linking them to services, tracking outcomes, and ensuring no board is left to figure it out alone.

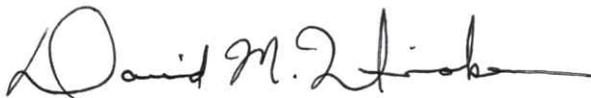
2. **It automates referral to JHBs for youth charged with a first-time misdemeanor.**

This bill ensures that every eligible young person in a community with an active JHB is automatically referred to the Juvenile Hearing Board.

In 2024, 254 young people went through JHBs across Rhode Island. The 3-year re-arrest rate is just 10 to 12 percent. These numbers reflect what happens when communities invest in their young people instead of processing them through a system that too often sets them back.

I urge this committee to pass Bill S 2940. Our youth are worth it. Rhode Island is worth it.

Respectfully submitted,



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