In support of H5648

Good evening, Chair and members of the judiciary committee,

My name is Alexandrea Gonzalez, and I am a devoted mother of a young boy with autism—an experience that has profoundly shaped my understanding of the justice system's impact on families. Tonight, I stand before you to advocate for the urgent passage of bill H5648, highlighting the critical consequences that will arise if we fail to act.

My own journey began as a teenager, navigating the challenges of life while my mother was incarcerated for drug-related charges. She spent nine months in jail, followed by another nine months in home confinement. I often reflect on how different my life might have been if supportive legislation had been in place back in 2003—perhaps my experience with homelessness during that tumultuous period could have been averted, forever changing my trajectory.

Today, countless families in Rhode Island are grappling with dire financial struggles. For instance, consider a single mother working full-time at $20 an hour; she would take home only around $2,700 a month. With two-bedroom apartments soaring between $1,800 and $2,500, meeting basic needs like housing, childcare, food, and clothing becomes a Herculean task. Moreover, many parents are burdened with car loans and insurance costs to ensure their children have safe transportation to school, especially when local districts fall short in providing adequate services.

I am here not only to share my story but to amplify the voices of parents and youth throughout Rhode Island who are caught in these cycles of hardship. It is imperative that we break this cycle and create lasting change. I implore you to support the passage of this vital bill, which is designed to keep families together and establish the necessary support systems that empower them to thrive and contribute positively to our community.

I welcome any questions you may have. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this pressing issue.

Sincerely,
Alexandrea Gonzalez
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