

April 1, 2025

Dear Chair Craven and Members of the House Judiciary,

My name is Anusha Alles. I am a Providence resident writing in support of passing HB6041, or BAIL ON 32. This is the fifth year that the bill is being heard.

We know the facts: this system is neither effective nor just. Despite being the smallest state, RI has the 4th highest recidivism rate in the country. Our system disproportionately sentences Black people to both incarceration and probation. The majority of people on probation are automatically denied bail in RI courts before being given any opportunity to contest a violation; on average, Rhode Islanders are held 31 days at the ACI without opportunity for a hearing, which means that many are forced to sign pleas rather than exercise their right to defend themselves. There is a vast amount of research demonstrating the level of racial bias in police stops and arrests, and systems such as ours only amplify the repercussions.

We know the impact. The gap between RI's rich and poor is widening, with the constant cycle of probation, violation, and incarceration disrupting our community members' access to stable income, housing, job training and other educational opportunities. The trauma of incarceration ranges from substance use relapse to illness and even death due to medical neglect behind the walls. Our children and our communities experience the effects, from the sudden loss of parents to the financial insecurity created in our homes. RI's probation system is indisputably a risk to the public.

Objections to this bill are weak, and have been repeatedly addressed: BAIL ON 32 only dictates bail around accusations of probation violation, and individuals can still be held without bail on new charges if they are severe. The organizers of this campaign have additionally negotiated a carve-out for violations related to 'crime of violence' charges. The idea that BAIL ON 32 will haphazardly release "violent criminals" is rooted in discriminatory fear-mongering, not facts.

Members of the legislature have also raised an objection that this bill violates separation of powers between the judiciary and legislature; yet the legislature has repeatedly intervened in judicial discretion via RIGL 11-47-5; RIGL 12-19-21; RIGL 12-19-38; RIGL 31-27-2; RIGL 11-47-3.2; and RIGL 12-29-5. These laws establish mandatory minimums. Will the legislature only intervene to increase criminalization of our communities?

Five years in, I can only hope that you will take a stand. As attacks on Black and brown communities escalate across our country, will you stand on the side of justice?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Anusha Alles

