

Support for H6041

Dear Chairman Craven and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my support for H6041, Bail on 32, to reform the parole/bail system.

The bill is designed to remove one of the many obstacles faced by those seeking to make a fresh start, while still retaining sanctions on others. I'll highlight an example that particularly resonated with me.

Here's part one of the story: Members of our church have been volunteering at local homeless shelters. This includes providing rides when the shelters close at 7:00am. One morning, two men asked their volunteer driver to drop them off at Butler Hospital so they could begin drug treatment. It did not occur to the volunteer that if he was stopped by the police, he might be immediately sent to jail if any illegal substances were found on his passengers. He did not need to fear the justice system because he had done nothing wrong. He would be innocent unless he was proven guilty.

Here's the other part: I attended a recent press conference in support of H6041 that included testimony from a man who had trained as a peer drug counselor. He explained that he was too fearful to work in that field because of the potential consequence if he was near anyone who was in possession. If accused of a parole violation, he could spend 10-14 days in jail – not able to care for his child, risking the loss of his job and any security he had established. His exit from this field is more than a loss to his career potential. It is also a loss to those he could have helped, since those with lived experience are often the most effective recovery coaches.

The juxtaposition of these two narratives illustrates one of the many tragedies in this flawed system. I know this is just one of the examples you will hear. I urge you to recommend H6041 for passage.

Sincerely,
Kate McGovern
Providence, RI