

# STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



## Department of Corrections

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The Honorable Robert E. Craven Sr.  
House Committee on Judiciary  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

April 3, 2025

**Re: H5131 – House Resolution Creating a Special Legislative Commission to Study and Provide Recommendations to Address Concerns in the Delivery of Healthcare to Inmates and Individuals Awaiting Trial in the Custody of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections**

Dear Chairperson Craven:

This evening the House Judiciary Committee will consider House Resolution #5131. This resolution would create a nine-member special legislative study commission, whose purpose it would be to study and provide recommendations for improvements in the delivery of health care services at the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC), and who would report back to the House no later than January 5, 2026. The Department has concerns about some of the assertions, mandates and inaccuracies in this resolution as presently written.

The potential composition of the legislative commission is of great concern to RIDOC. The only member of this commission that would be required to have any clinical experience is RIDOC's Medical Director. If the goal is to address concerns within RIDOC's healthcare system, it would be more appropriate to include local providers or practitioners on the commission who can articulate the clinical needs of such patients and have a sense of the barriers that may exist related to meeting required standards of care as they are applied to the Department.

It is disingenuous to suggest RIDOC has limited access to necessary substance use disorder treatments. RIDOC's Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program offers incarcerated individuals with access to medication and therapy before and after being released from prison, through CODAC Behavioral Healthcare. We remain proud to be the first correctional system in the country to implement such a program. Our dedicated staff carefully considers and thoughtfully recommends admission to the program. With the many variables considered when evaluating such individuals, enrollment in the MAT program remains a clinical decision made by RIDOC healthcare staff or its contracted providers.

As it relates to mental health care, our Behavioral Health Unit is staffed by sixteen RIDOC employees, including the Clinical Director, the Supervising Clinical Psychologist and thirteen (13) Clinical Social Workers. Mental Health treatment is provided via a variety of methods including individual and group therapy; medication-based treatment; psychoeducational interventions and evidenced-based behavioral interventions including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT); Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT);

The Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC) contributes to public safety by maintaining a balanced correctional system of institutional and community programs that provide a range of custodial options, supervision and rehabilitative services in order to facilitate successful offender reentry into the community upon release.

Motivational Interviewing and Anger Management. Psychiatric services are provided through contracts with Rhode Island Hospital/Lifespan Department of Psychiatry for both the sentenced and awaiting-trial facilities. RIDOC has undertaken a significant and labor-intensive effort to align its mental health policies with both National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) and American Corrections Association (ACA) standards.

As it relates to the population at the Adult Correctional Institutions (ACI), while the average population in FY23 was 2,298, the statistic related to the awaiting trial population is not accurate. RIDOC did not have 7,978 persons awaiting trial, it had 709. Furthermore, to demonstrate the amount of time awaiting trial individuals are in RIDOC custody, over 50% of those awaiting trial were released within 6 days, and nearly 78% of are released within 31 days.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

Sincerely,



Wayne T. Salisbury Jr.  
Director

cc: Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee  
The Honorable Representatives J. Lombardi, Hull, Ajello, Potter, and Stewart  
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House