

# The Just Criminal Justice Group, LLC



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## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF 2025—H 5349 & 2025—S 0618

- This thoughtful legislation, introduced at the request of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC), would provide an exemption for certain incarcerated persons from the payment for a first request for vital statistics from the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH). It does so by allowing for an exemption for incarcerated persons who need a certified copy of their birth certificate, thereby removing a prevalent barrier to a successful reentry in the community.
- The legislation is hard evidence that speaks to the extraordinary progress made by and hard work engaged in by RIDOC over the last several years as it continues to develop and enhance opportunities for inmates to successfully re-enter into the community, after their release from prison, when their debt to society has been paid in full. This commitment by RIDOC helps to reduce the recidivism rate by taking proactive steps to remove barriers to reentry to the community upon the conclusion of one's time in prison.
- After years and in some cases decades in prison, friends and family of the incarcerated may have died or moved. As a result, essential records become lost or misplaced. Having available the appropriate records necessary to access employment, education, benefits, housing or services will go a long way towards ensuring that the formerly incarcerated achieve a successful re-entry into society.
- Many other states and even the federal government have enacted similar measures for their incarcerated populations. This will bring Rhode Island in line with the proactive steps other states have taken to ensure those leaving its custody depart with needed documentation/records.
- The RIDOC has indicated that in 2022, nearly three hundred requests for birth certificates were granted at a cost of \$25/application. This is a small price to pay compared to the increased costs of incarceration from recidivism attributable to unsuccessful re-entry attempts.

## QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? CONCERNS?

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