



April 3, 2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven Sr., Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island Statehouse
Providence, 02903

To Criminal Procedure – Sentencing Reconsideration Act

Dear Chairman Craven and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of United Way of Rhode Island, we proudly support House Bill 5362, which advances equity and social justice by creating pathways for second chances and meaningful reintegration. Through the ADVOCATE UNITED initiative of our LIVE UNITED 2025 Strategic Plan, we are committed to dismantling systemic barriers and advancing policies that promote racial, social, and economic justice in every community.

House Bill 5362 offers a fair and compassionate path forward for individuals who have served at least ten years of their sentence by allowing them to petition the court for sentence reduction—excluding those serving life without parole or mandatory sentences. This policy affirms the value of rehabilitation and recognizes that individuals can grow, change, and meaningfully rejoin society after decades of incarceration.

The proposal does not guarantee sentence reduction. Instead, it offers a structured, judicially reviewed opportunity for individuals to demonstrate personal transformation and readiness to return to the community. Over the course of a decade or more, many incarcerated individuals engage in education, vocational training, therapy, and restorative practices. These experiences often lead to personal growth, skill development, and a genuine desire to give back.

This policy also helps address the deeply embedded racial and economic disparities in our criminal justice system. In 2019, nearly 46% of the U.S. prison population serving more than 10 years was Black, while Black Americans made up just 14% of the national population (The Sentencing Project, *One in*

[Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.](#)

Five, 2023). Without reform, long-term incarceration continues to disproportionately burden communities of color and contributes to generational poverty and disconnection.

House Bill 5362 reflects the values of fairness, accountability, and the belief in second chances—cornerstones of a more just and humane justice system. By establishing a thoughtful, court-guided process for sentence reconsideration, the bill recognizes that individuals can grow, rehabilitate, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. With the right support, those given a second chance are more likely to succeed, rejoin the workforce, and promote community well-being. Supporting this legislation is not only a matter of justice—it is an investment in public safety, economic opportunity, and a stronger, more inclusive Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Diana Garlington
PVD Equity Program Officer
United Way Rhode Island