

Michael R. Lanowy

P.O. Box 3621

Cranston, RI 02910

March 30, 2025

Opposition to H5362

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I write to you in strong opposition to House Bill 5362. Rhode Island law is already fair and just in the sentencing of offenders. The idea that additional leniency is warranted due to an offenders success or attempt at rehabilitation undermines the entire idea of our prison system. Offenders are SUPPOSED TO take part in rehabilitative efforts. They are rewarded in that process with good time off of their sentence and a favorable chance in the current parole system. Inmates in Rhode Island are eligible for a chance at Parole after serving a third of their sentence. Recently, in a court decision that defies common sense, the Parole board does not consider the difference between concurrent and consecutive sentences when determining the chance at parole.

This bill will cause added trauma to the victims and their families as they will have to re-live the crime more often and much sooner than the small relief that they received at the original sentencing. Our current system is more than fair and just towards the perpetrators of crime. Inmates are supposed to take advantage of the variety of programs offered to rehabilitate them, they should not be further "rewarded" for doing so. The goal of rehabilitation is for the individual to reform their criminal behavior. It is not supposed to be transactional. It currently already is as most offenders will only participate in programs that offer "good time" off of their sentence. When eligible for Parole, this is the time to present evidence of their rehabilitative efforts for a favorable result. There is no need to offer Parol even earlier just because the offender actually participated in these programs.

I realize that as you hear testimony most of it is for this legislation rather than against. The rest of this letter, and my in-person testimony, will hopefully offer some perspective on the reason for this. Who speaks for the victims? You've received many letters on this from Rhode Island nonprofits. If you follow the money, much of the financial backing begins in Washington with our tax dollars. It's washed through several bigger non profits until it comes out on our end, advocating for perpetrators of crime and not the victims. The pendulum has swung far enough and it's time to put a stop to this. Where are the nonprofits for the victims?

When a person in Rhode Island is arrested the slant AGAINST victims begins almost immediately. More than 99% of all cases adjudicated in the Rhode Island Courts are plea bargained. Once sentenced, inmates can earn up to 17 days a month off their sentence. They are eligible for Parole after just a third of their sentence. If they were sentenced before they turned 22 years old, they were given an earlier chance at Parole as a result of Mario's law. Many murderers are free today that shouldn't be because of this law. Some are already back at the ACI for new crimes. Rhode Island is an outlier with some of the highest probation rates in the country. What they didn't tell you was we are also an outlier with some of the lowest incarceration rates in the country. This means that offenders are getting probation time in lieu of incarceration time not in addition to.

Enough is enough. There is no need to further weaken our Criminal Justice system. Please vote no on this unnecessary bill that just turns it's back on the victims. They are your constituents too, even if they couldn't be here to testify because there aren't a gaggle of non profits who care about them like they do the criminals.

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