

H5927 and H5928

HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov

Dear Members of House Judiciary Committee,

I urge you to support House Bills 5927 and 5928. My name is Teagan Marble, a social work student at Rhode Island College and a resident of Warwick. For this semester, I chose to focus on the effects of solitary confinement for several classes. As a result, I have investigated Rhode Island's disciplinary housing policies, poured over many research studies, and read testimonies of incarcerated individuals that have experienced this punishment. The findings were disheartening, discouraging, and appalling.

Rhode Island was a colony that was founded on freedom. To learn, through research studies, that disciplinary confinement causes trauma, PTSD, and loss of identity, while causing no improvements to prisoner behavior, I have to wonder why this is a practice we still partake in. The Quaker Communities first tried out the idea of solitary confinement in the 1800s. The segregated individuals lost their abilities to function and many committed suicides. The Quakers saw this was harmful and stopped it. Why, in the year 2025, are we still repeating their same mistakes? This does not align with a state founded on freedom.

Holding an inmate in disciplinary confinement is shown to cost more than twice that of an inmate of the general population. Not only is it torturous, but it is also fiscally wasteful.

The United States Constitution gives every citizen the right against cruel and unusual punishment. Is disciplinary confinement not cruel? The Quakers sure thought it was, so do I, and so do Rhode Islanders who have been incarcerated. Just because they have committed a crime, they are still citizens of our country who deserve to be treated with decency. I cannot stand by while citizens of my country are being tortured.

Furthermore, I believe our correctional officers need to be wearing body cameras. Willie Washington Jr. should not have died because of his correctional status. Our officers need cameras for transparency and accountability. Just as our officers in the community must wear cameras to ensure best practice, so should our correctional officers.

Again, I urge you to support House Bills 5927 and 5928. Thank you for your time.

Teagan Marble