



**SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF COYOTE RI**

To the members of the House Judiciary Committee:

January 24th, 2022

My name is Bella Robinson. I am a resident of West Warwick, (District 27- Representative Patricia Serpa).

I am writing to you today in support of H7085, which would allow us to reduce mass incarceration in RI.

H7085, states that before a judge issues a jail sentence, the judge has to consider the need for rehabilitation, treatment and training as well as the defendant's history and the seriousness of the crime.

We suggest that this bill is amended to include that the judge consider if the defendant is a "primary caretaker"

Often we see our community members arrested for petty offenses, and when they can't make bail or are sentenced to incarceration, their children end up in state care.

We also suggest that the judge ensures people have access to adequate services so they will succeed.

In June of 2020 COYOTE took a good look at women incarcerated in Rhode Island, at which time there were only 81 women locked up at the ACI and 75% of them were incarcerated for misdemeanors at the cost of 133k a year each. Upon release the women are not even provided 50 dollars anymore. Instead they are handed a print out of RI Coalition for the homeless with the list of shelters etc..

As we all know all of our EM shelters are full. This is very problematic for people being released from the ACI who do not have friends or family to go live with.

In fact, for 133k a year we could pay a person's tuition at a community college, pay for their housing, transportation and childcare and even provide them a monthly allowance. Then in a

few years they would have a degree and become self-sufficient and a productive member of our community.

Reducing the sentences of our elderly and terminally ill community members who are incarcerated needs to be a priority, as we have seen that the ACI has failed to protect these vulnerable populations from COVID. These are our community members and they were not sentenced to death. Nobody deserves to die in a cage without access to adequate medical care.

We believe everyone deserves a second chance and mass incarceration has proven to be a failure. It traumatizes people, and forces them into the edges of society and it breaks up families and causes people to be displaced. Criminal convictions create barriers to future employment and housing. It's time we reduce Rhode Island's incarceration rates and provide people being released with adequate resources to rebuild their lives.

For these reasons we ask you to vote YES on H7085

Sincerely,

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2022 FreeHer Fellowship Facilitator