

2023 -- H 6163

LC002602

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

JOINT RESOLUTION

CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE TO IMPROVE THE LONG-TERM
OUTCOMES AND REDUCE RECIDIVISM OF FEMALES WITHIN THE CRIMINAL
JUSTICE POPULATION

Introduced By: Representatives Solomon, Edwards, Kazarian, Casimiro, Spears, Casey,
Potter, Cruz, Felix, and Kislak

Date Introduced: March 17, 2023

Referred To: House Judiciary

1 WHEREAS, Incarcerated women are often young, single mothers from ethnic minority
2 backgrounds who have little education, poor work histories, and are disproportionately low-
3 income. Mental illness, and high rates of PTSD and substance-use disorders, are common
4 problems among female detainees who have often also been victims of abuse themselves; and

5 WHEREAS, The most difficult part of an incarcerated female's experience is often re-
6 entry, when women must comply with conditions of probation or parole, achieve financial
7 stability, access health care, locate housing, and attempt to reunite with their families; and

8 WHEREAS, Employment is only one of several major factors that plays a key role in the
9 successful re-entry and rehabilitation of justice-involved individuals. Statistically, 60 percent of
10 incarcerated women "met the cutoff for PTSD," while 80 percent met the criteria for having a
11 substance-use disorder, and 60 percent had children; and

12 WHEREAS, Problems surrounding separation from children and family, lack of housing,
13 inadequate mental health care, and insufficient substance abuse treatment during and after their
14 imprisonment often contribute to increased recidivism; and

15 WHEREAS, Currently, existing services and supports are not fully leveraged to wholly
16 assist individuals as they transition from a correctional institution back to the community. This
17 creates significant gaps in care for Rhode Islanders who are exiting prison or jail and returning
18 home to families and communities; and

19 WHEREAS, By investing in support for mental health and abuse, and by expanding

1 diversion, parole and re-entry programming and housing, government can better support our
2 communities and families as a whole by greatly increasing positive outcomes; now, therefore be
3 it

4 RESOLVED, That a special legislative task force be and the same is hereby created
5 consisting of nineteen (19) members: three (3) of whom shall be members of the Rhode Island
6 Senate, with not more than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the President
7 of the Senate; three (3) of whom shall be members of the Rhode Island House of Representatives,
8 with not more than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the Speaker of the
9 House; one of whom shall be a representative of the Judicial Branch, to be appointed by the Chief
10 Justice of the Supreme Court; one of whom shall be the Director of the Rhode Island Department
11 of Corrections (DOC), or designee; one of whom shall be the Director of the Department of
12 Behavioral Healthcare Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), or designee; one of
13 whom shall be the Rhode Island Public Defender, or designee; one of whom shall be the Rhode
14 Island Attorney General, or designee; one of whom shall be the Chair of the Rhode Island Parole
15 Board, or designee; one of whom shall be a former warden of the Rhode Island women's prison,
16 to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be a representative from
17 OpenDoors, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; one of whom shall be a representative
18 from the Formerly Incarcerated Union of Rhode Island, to be appointed by the President of the
19 Senate; one of whom shall be a representative from the Center for Health and Justice
20 Transformation, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; one of whom shall be a municipal
21 police chief, or designee, appointed by the President of the Senate; and one of whom shall be a
22 representative from the Rhode Island Brotherhood of Correctional Officers, to be appointed by
23 Speaker of the House; and one of whom shall be the Director of the RI Department of Children,
24 Youth & Families, or designee.

25 In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a legislative study
26 commission or task force, created by a General Assembly resolution, the appointing authority
27 may appoint a member of the general public to serve in lieu of a legislator, provided that the
28 majority leader or the minority leader of the political party which is entitled to the appointment
29 consents to the member of the general public.

30 The purpose of said task force shall be to acquire the data and methodology to formulate
31 a detailed blueprint for a Request for Proposal (RFP), utilizing information from state
32 departments and agencies to implement pre-sentencing and post-sentencing strategies for women
33 transitioning in or out of the criminal justice system including, but not limited to:

34 Examine best practices to improving the long-term outcomes and reduce recidivism of

1 individuals awaiting sentencing;

2 Ascertain intervention and supportive pathways and services;

3 Calculate estimated costs for implementation of all programs;

4 Provide costs and local participation policies and requirements for potential housing
5 sources;

6 Ascertain sustainable funding avenues and legal pathways to implementing policies and
7 programs on the State and local level; and

8 Differentiate the needs of those entering the criminal justice system and those
9 transitioning back to the community following a period of incarceration.

10 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the task force shall meet at the
11 call of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House and organize, and shall select co-
12 Chairpersons from among the legislative members.

13 Vacancies in said task force shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.

14 The membership of said task force shall receive no compensation for their services.

15 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,
16 documentary and otherwise, to said task force and its agents as is deemed necessary or desirable
17 by the task force to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

18 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide
19 suitable quarters for said task force; and be it further

20 RESOLVED, That the task force shall report its findings to the General Assembly no
21 later than February 5, 2024, and said task force shall expire on April 5, 2024.

=====
LC002602
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
JOINT RESOLUTION
CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE TO IMPROVE THE LONG-TERM
OUTCOMES AND REDUCE RECIDIVISM OF FEMALES WITHIN THE CRIMINAL
JUSTICE POPULATION

1 This resolution creates a nineteen (19) member task force whose purpose it would be to
2 improve outcomes and reduce recidivism of females in the criminal justice system, and who
3 would report back to the General Assembly no later than February 5, 2024, and would expire on
4 April 5, 2024.

=====
LC002602
=====