

2025 -- S 0518

LC000802

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY THE IMPACT AND
POTENTIAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF BAIL REFORMS ON BLACK RHODE
ISLANDERS AND THE STATE

Introduced By: Senators Mack, Acosta, Kallman, Gu, Britto, and Euer

Date Introduced: February 26, 2025

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 WHEREAS, Pre-trial detention is one of the earliest points in the criminal justice system
2 and typically represents an individual's first prospect of being incarcerated. The individual is
3 simply jailed while awaiting trial and not yet convicted of a crime, and still legally innocent; and

4 WHEREAS, The main purposes of pretrial detention are to secure the appearance at trial
5 of defendants who are flight risks and to protect the community from further criminal activity of
6 the person charged; and

7 WHEREAS, Defendants detained before trial represent over 75 percent of all jail inmates
8 in some parts of the country, with significantly higher rates of pretrial detention among black and
9 Hispanic individuals; and

10 WHEREAS, First-time offenders accused of low-level crimes, often spend months in
11 pretrial detention and face subsequent long-term damage in the form of family separation and
12 adverse impacts on young children, work interruption, and loss of housing; and

13 WHEREAS, Many individuals are jailed pretrial because they can't afford money bail, and
14 others because prior probation or parole has resulted in the court placing a "hold" on their release.
15 The number of people in jail pretrial has nearly quadrupled since the 1980s; and

16 WHEREAS, There are a number of different types of pre-trial supervised release including
17 social workers and case managers from local organizations working with people to address barriers
18 to court attendance and connect them to social services, employment and location monitoring,

1 mental health treatment, and substance abuse treatment; and

2 WHEREAS, Balancing the greatest social benefit and/or risks to public safety, and return
3 on investment and use of taxpayer resources is necessary in order to provide the best data-driven
4 policy solutions; now, therefore be it

5 RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission be and the same is hereby created
6 consisting of eleven (11) members; three (3) of whom shall be members of the Rhode Island Senate,
7 to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be the RI Attorney General, or
8 designee; one of whom shall be a representative of the Judicial Branch, to be appointed by the Chief
9 Justice; one of whom shall be the Chair of the Rhode Island Parole Board, or designee; one of
10 whom shall be a warden of a Rhode Island prison, to be appointed by the President of the Senate;
11 one of whom shall be a representative from the Center for Health and Justice Transformation, to be
12 appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be the Director of the RI Department
13 of Children, Youth & Families, or designee; and two (2) of whom shall be persons formerly
14 incarcerated pre-trial in the State of Rhode Island, to be appointed by the President of the Senate.

15 In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a legislative study commission
16 or task force, created by a General Assembly resolution, the appointing authority may appoint a
17 member of the general public to serve in lieu of a legislator.

18 The purpose of said commission shall be to analyze the economic and societal benefits and
19 risks of pre-trial supervised release as an alternative to pre-trial detention, determine the impact of
20 reforms on Black Rhode Islanders, and provide recommendations to reduce the population and all
21 fees, costs and expenses incurred by pre-trial persons and the State.

22 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at
23 the call of the President of the Senate and organize, and shall select a Chairperson from among the
24 legislative members.

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

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

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

30 The Joint Committee on Legislative Services is hereby authorized and directed to provide
31 suitable quarters for said commission; and be it further

32 RESOLVED, That said commission shall report its findings to the President of the Senate

1 no later than February 5, 2026, and said task force shall expire on April 5, 2026.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY THE IMPACT AND
POTENTIAL ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF BAIL REFORMS ON BLACK RHODE
ISLANDERS AND THE STATE

- 1 This resolution would create an eleven (11) member special legislative study commission
2 whose purpose it would be to analyze the impact and potential economic benefits of bail reforms
3 on Black Rhode Islanders, and who would report back to the Senate no later than February 5, 2026,
4 and whose life would expire on April 5, 2026.

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