

2026 -- H 8503

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LC006403
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

**CREATING A HOUSE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY-
BASED SOLUTIONS TO REDUCE THE INCARCERATION OF WOMEN**

Introduced By: Representatives Felix, Cruz, Potter, J. Lombardi, Hull, Tanzi, Kislak,
Shallcross Smith, Ajello, and Fogarty

Date Introduced: May 01, 2026

Referred To: House Judiciary

1 WHEREAS, Rhode Island is committed to improving public safety while reducing
2 unnecessary incarceration through investments in effective community-based programs and
3 services; and

4 WHEREAS, Research and experience demonstrate that women involved in the criminal
5 justice system frequently face complex challenges including addiction, trauma, housing
6 instability, and barriers to employment and family reunification; and

7 WHEREAS, Addressing these challenges through coordinated public health, housing,
8 and recovery services can reduce recidivism and strengthen communities; and

9 WHEREAS, Rhode Island has begun to develop innovative approaches to support
10 women transitioning in and out of the criminal justice system, including diversion programs,
11 transitional housing, recovery services, and other community-based interventions designed to
12 break the cycle of addiction and incarceration; and

13 WHEREAS, Collaborative partnerships between state agencies, the judiciary, community
14 organizations, and academic institutions are necessary to successfully implement and evaluate
15 such programs; and

16 WHEREAS, Rhode Island has received federal support through the United States
17 Department of Justice Second Chance Act to expand evidence-based reentry services for women
18 and to rigorously evaluate the outcomes of those interventions; and

19 WHEREAS, Innovative medical treatments may also play a role in improving recovery

1 outcomes, including emerging evidence that medications in the GLP-1 class may help reduce
2 cravings associated with substance use disorders and related compulsive behaviors; and

3 WHEREAS, The State would benefit from a coordinated forum to review existing
4 initiatives, explore new policy options, and support the effective implementation of programs
5 designed to reduce incarceration among women while improving long-term health and public
6 safety outcomes; now, therefore be it

7 RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission to examine strategies for reducing
8 the incarceration of women in Rhode Island and supporting effective community-based
9 alternatives to incarceration is hereby created consisting of fifteen (15) members: one of whom
10 shall be a member of the House, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; one of whom shall
11 be a representative of the Governor, to be appointed by the Governor; one of whom shall be a
12 representative of the Judicial Branch appointed by the Chief Justice; one of whom shall be the
13 Director of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (DOC), or designee; one of whom shall
14 be the Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, or designee; one of
15 whom shall be the Director of the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental
16 Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), or designee; one of whom shall be the Rhode Island Public
17 Defender, or designee; one of whom shall be the Rhode Island Attorney General or designee; one
18 of whom shall be the Chair of the Rhode Island Parole Board or designee; one of whom shall be
19 the Director of the Executive Office of Housing, or designee; one of whom shall be a
20 representative from OpenDoors, an agency that provides reentry services; one of whom shall be a
21 formerly incarcerated woman with experience in reentry or recovery services; one of whom shall
22 be a representative from the People, Places & Health Collective of the Brown University School
23 of Public Health; one of whom shall be a representative from the Center for Addiction Science,
24 Policy and Research (CASPR); and one of whom shall be a representative from the Governor's
25 Advisory Council on Housing and Homelessness.

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

31 The purpose of said commission shall include, but not be limited to:

32 (1) Reviewing existing programs and policies related to diversion, reentry, housing
33 stabilization, and recovery services for women involved in the criminal justice system;

34 (2) Identifying opportunities to expand and strengthen community-based alternatives to

1 incarceration that improve long-term outcomes and reduce recidivism;

2 (3) Supporting the successful implementation and evaluation of initiatives funded through
3 the United States Department of Justice Second Chance Act, including the OpenDoors reentry
4 and diversion trial operating in Rhode Island;

5 (4) Examining the role that innovative medical treatments and recovery supports may
6 play in improving outcomes for justice-involved women, including the potential use of GLP-1
7 medications and other emerging treatments that may help reduce the cycle of addiction and
8 incarceration;

9 (5) Reviewing best practices from other states and national research on effective
10 interventions for women in the criminal justice system; and

11 (6) Making recommendations to the House regarding policy, funding, and programmatic
12 changes that would improve outcomes for women and their families while strengthening public
13 safety.

14 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet and
15 organize, and shall select a chairperson from among the members.

16 Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.

17 The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

18 The commission shall exist for approximately two (2) years from the date of formation.

19 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,
20 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or
21 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the
23 House no later than April 28, 2028, and may issue interim reports prior to that date, and said
24 commission shall expire on May 30, 2028.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

CREATING A HOUSE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY-
BASED SOLUTIONS TO REDUCE THE INCARCERATION OF WOMEN

- 1 This resolution would create a special legislative commission to study and provide
- 2 recommendations relating to supporting community-based solutions to reduce the incarceration of
- 3 women in Rhode Island.

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