

2021 -- S 0245

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

SENATE RESOLUTION

CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY JUSTICE
REINVESTMENT PROPOSALS AND PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDUCING
THE INCARCERATION OF WOMEN

Introduced By: Senators Kallman, Quezada, Pearson, McCaffrey, DiMario, Valverde,
Coyne, Mack, Miller, and Acosta

Date Introduced: February 10, 2021

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

1 WHEREAS, Rhode Island is actively striving towards investing in community services in
2 a way that decreases crime, recidivism, and incarceration; and

3 WHEREAS, Rhode Island will be best able to ensure a safe and just community by
4 investing in educational, health, and social services that will decrease the conditions that lead to
5 criminal activity; and

6 WHEREAS, Rhode Island is committed to community safety through a combination of
7 dedicated law enforcement, crime prevention, and restorative justice measures; and

8 WHEREAS, Rhode Island is focused on public safety through the maintenance of a
9 balanced correctional system of institutional and community-based programs that provide
10 rehabilitative options to help facilitate successful reentry; and

11 WHEREAS, There is strong evidence that successful community programs can
12 effectively reduce crime and incarceration and present viable and financially efficient alternatives
13 to punishment based models; and

14 WHEREAS, The Rhode Island Working Group for Juvenile and Criminal Justice has
15 proposed a number of recommendations for improving and expanding reentry support systems in
16 the areas of corrections, housing, employment, education, and juvenile justice; and

17 WHEREAS, The Justice Reinvestment Working Group established the need and cost-
18 effectiveness of investing in recidivism reduction best practices in ways that will reduce overall
19 correctional costs; and

1 WHEREAS, It is necessary to continue to establish clear plans for funding and
2 implementing the proposals of the Rhode Island Working Group for Juvenile and Criminal
3 Justice, and the Justice Reinvestment Working Group in ways that will allow for greater
4 community investment; and

5 WHEREAS, Women enter prison with very high rates of addiction, trauma, and physical
6 abuse and most women in prison are mothers of children. It is necessary to prioritize the
7 development and launch of expanded diversion and alternatives to incarceration that can help
8 these women recover from these challenges and avoid further incarceration; and

9 WHEREAS, The number of women currently incarcerated at the Adult Correctional
10 Institutions has dramatically fallen over the past twelve months and is far below the maximum
11 capacity of the facility; and

12 WHEREAS, The Gloria McDonald building which serves as the primary women's prison
13 was originally designed as a Maximum security prison for men and has instead been used as the
14 sole women's prison for all levels of security, creating significant challenges for the Rhode Island
15 Department of Corrections and the incarcerated women; and

16 WHEREAS, The Department of Corrections has proposed in its FY 21 budget to close
17 the Gloria McDonald for the purposes of reducing its budget; now, therefore be it

18 RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission be and the same is hereby created
19 consisting of thirteen (13) members: one of whom shall be a member of the Rhode Island Senate,
20 to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be a representative of the
21 Judicial Branch, to be appointed by the Chief Justice; one of whom shall be the Director of the
22 Rhode Island Department of Corrections (DOC), or designee; one of whom shall be the Director
23 of the Department of Behavioral Healthcare Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH),
24 or designee; one of whom shall be the Rhode Island Public Defender, or designee; one of whom
25 shall be the Rhode Island Attorney General, or designee; one of whom shall be the Chair of the
26 Rhode Island Parole Board, or designee; one of whom shall be a former warden of the Rhode
27 Island women's prison, to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be a
28 representative from OpenDoors, to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom
29 shall be a representative from the Formerly Incarcerated Union of Rhode Island, to be appointed
30 by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be a representative from the Center for Health
31 and Justice Transformation, to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be
32 a representative from Amos House, to be appointed by the President of the Senate; and one of
33 whom shall be a representative from the Rhode Island Brotherhood of Correctional Officers, to be
34 appointed by the President of the Senate.

1 In lieu of any appointment of a member of the legislature to a permanent advisory
2 commission, a legislative study commission, or any commission created by a General Assembly
3 resolution, the appointing authority may appoint a member of the general public to serve in lieu
4 of a legislator, provided that the majority leader or the minority leader of the political party which
5 is entitled to the appointment consents to the member of the general public.

6 The purpose of said commission shall be to study the merits and feasibility of justice
7 reinvestment proposals which provide a clear blueprint for community driven public safety,
8 recidivism reduction, lowering public safety spending, and long-term sustainability of
9 investments into community resources and that would reduce the number of women incarcerated
10 in Rhode Island, including, but not limited to, analyzing the feasibility of the Department of
11 Corrections' proposal to close the women's facility from the perspective of a commitment to
12 justice reinvestment principles.

13 Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at
14 the call of the President of the Senate and organize, and shall select a chairperson from among the
15 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 All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and information,
19 documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or
20 desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.

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

23 RESOLVED, That the commission shall issue an initial report on its findings no later
24 than five months after passage of this resolution, and a following report after twelve months. Said
25 commission shall expire on January 5, 2023.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
SENATE RESOLUTION
CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY JUSTICE
REINVESTMENT PROPOSALS AND PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDUCING
THE INCARCERATION OF WOMEN

- 1 This resolution would create a thirteen (13) member special legislative study commission
- 2 whose purpose it would be to study justice reinvestment proposals and provide recommendations
- 3 for reducing the incarceration of women, and who would report back to the Senate five months
- 4 after passage of this resolution, and whose life would expire on January 5, 2023.

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