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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 (12) months and is far below the
11 maximum 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 purpose 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 fifteen (15) members: three (3) of whom shall be members of the Rhode Island
20 Senate, with not more than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the President
21 of the Senate; one of whom shall be a representative of the Judicial Branch, to be appointed by
22 the Chief Justice; one of whom shall be the Director of the Rhode Island Department of
23 Corrections (DOC), or designee; one of whom shall be the Director of the Department of
24 Behavioral Healthcare Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), or designee; one of
25 whom shall be the Rhode Island Public Defender, or designee; one of whom shall be the Rhode
26 Island Attorney General, or designee; one of whom shall be the Chair of the Rhode Island Parole
27 Board, or designee; one of whom shall be a former warden of the Rhode Island women's prison,
28 to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be a representative from
29 OpenDoors, to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be a representative
30 from the Formerly Incarcerated Union of Rhode Island, to be appointed by the President of the
31 Senate; one of whom shall be a representative from the Center for Health and Justice
32 Transformation, to be appointed by the President of the Senate; one of whom shall be a municipal
33 police chief, or designee, appointed by the President of the Senate; and one of whom shall be a
34 representative from the Rhode Island Brotherhood of Correctional Officers, to be appointed by

1 the President of the Senate.

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

24 RESOLVED, That the commission shall issue an initial report on its findings no later
25 than five (5) months after passage of this resolution, and a following report after twelve (12)
26 months. Said commission shall expire on January 5, 2023.

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