



State of Rhode Island

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE JULIE A. CASIMIRO, *District 31*

Deputy Majority Leader

First Vice-Chairwoman, Committee on Oversight

Chairwoman, Oversight Subcommittee on Children and Families

Committee on Education

Committee on Judiciary

Committee on Veterans' Affairs

To: New Mexico Committee of the Courts, Corrections, and Justice

From: Rhode Island Representative Julie Casimiro

Date: November 5, 2025

Re: Serious Youthful Offender 30-Year Review Procedure and Senate Bill 64 (2023)

To the Members of the Courts, Corrections and Justice Committee,

My name is Julie Casimiro, and I serve as a State Representative in the Rhode Island General Assembly. I am writing to you today not only as a colleague in public service but as someone who has navigated a challenge regarding parole eligibility for youthful offenders that parallels current events in New Mexico.

I have been a member of the Rhode Island House of Representatives since 2016. I have served as the Deputy Majority Leader since 2019, and am a member of the House Judiciary Committee. In 2021, I served as the lead sponsor of Rhode Island's Youthful Offender Act,¹ legislation designed to give those sentenced as children a meaningful opportunity for release after decades of incarceration. I am writing to offer a perspective from our state's recent experience concerning parole for youthful offenders.

I sponsored the 2021 legislation with recognition of the current scientific understanding about adolescent brain development and to bring Rhode Island in line with nationwide reforms of youth sentencing laws. The legislation was enacted with the clearly stated intention of providing parole eligibility to a community of individuals who committed offenses when they were under age 22. The legislation provided for parole eligibility after the individual served 20 years. Following passage, the Rhode Island Attorney General and Department of Corrections incorrectly interpreted the law to require certain individuals to be paroled into their consecutive sentence. Because of this interpretive dispute, Rhode Island endured protracted and costly litigation. The multi-year legal process consumed significant state resources and created profound uncertainty for all involved until the state high court stepped in. In 2024, the Supreme Court of Rhode Island ruled that a youth's sentences must be aggregated to permit parole eligibility after serving no more than 20 years.

¹ H5144, enacted via the FY22 State Budget (P.L. 2021, ch. 162, art. 13, § 3.)

Since our state Supreme Court clarified the law's application, the legislation has been a clear success in Rhode Island. To date, seven individuals have been granted parole and released into the community, where they are succeeding. I am in contact with several individuals who are home and thriving. They are integrated into the community, including being gainfully employed, attending higher education programs, and starting businesses and nonprofits. Their lives serve as powerful examples of rehabilitation and the positive impact of these second-chance laws. I look forward to welcoming more of these individuals into our local community.

I offer these reflections in the spirit of shared lessons learned between our states. I hope that hearing about Rhode Island's experience is helpful as you navigate the implementation of your own law.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

 H.O.

Julie A. Casimiro

Rhode Island State Representative

District 31

North Kingstown – Exeter