



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
Fax: (401) 831-7175
www.riaclu.org
info@riaclu.org

ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT/AMEND

TESTIMONY ON 23-H 5127, AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT – CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT February 7, 2023

This legislation would codify standards for the collection of certain demographic data – specifically the race, sex, country of origin, and level of education – from individuals entering the custody of the state Department of Corrections. While RIDOC currently publishes information on the race and sex of individuals in their custody in the annual population reports released by the agency, it is always beneficial and positive to have such requirements officially codified in state law for ongoing, consistent, and reliable data collection purposes. The additional data to be reported on can serve as a useful policy tool in many ways.

However, we would suggest two additions to the list of data. One would be the collection of the person’s home address. This is an important piece of information that could be used, as it was last year, to address the issue of “prison gerrymandering” when the next census is performed. The consultants who prepared last year’s redistricting maps pointed to difficulties in obtaining accurate address information from the DOC about many of the people incarcerated there. Including this simple addition to the bill would go a long way to making the next redistricting more accurate. However, for obvious privacy reasons, we would propose that only the zip code – which provides very useful information in and of itself – be *publicly* available.

The second addition we would suggest is the collection of information about the person’s ethnicity, which is not the same as their nativity. This again is a valuable piece of demographic information for research and policy purposes. We would therefore propose that the language be amended as follows:

(b) The department of corrections shall collect the following information from individuals entering its custody: sex, race, nativity (country of origin), [ethnicity](#), [home address](#), and level of education, and publish a summary of such information on an annual basis; [provided, however, that only zip code data of home addresses shall be published.](#)

In supporting this legislation, we therefore urge consideration and support of this amendment as well. Thank you for considering our views.