



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

TESTIMONY ON 23-H 5313, AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT – THE MEDICAID REENTRY ACT April 27, 2023

It has been well documented that the time immediately post-incarceration can be some of the most vulnerable for a formerly incarcerated individual. Suicide and overdose risks for these individuals are alarmingly high, especially in the first weeks and months following their release – in fact, “during just the first two weeks after release from prison, people leaving custody face a risk of death more than 12 times higher than that of the general U.S. population, with disproportionately high rates of death from drug overdose and illness.”¹ In light of this, comprehensive examinations of the way individuals are transitioned out of the prison setting are particularly important, not only to ensure ongoing rehabilitation and community reintegration and to prevent recidivism, but to critically ensure the health of the formerly incarcerated individual.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Rhode Island supports this legislation, which aims to give these individuals access to Medicaid coverage promptly upon their release, guaranteeing that any mental health or substance use disorder treatments that they were receiving during their incarceration remain accessible to them without a break in treatment. This bill represents an important acknowledgement of the need for continuity of care, especially for individuals facing the vulnerable and potentially disrupting period of post-incarceration.

We urge the committee to act favorably on this bill, as it represents a humane and forward-thinking policy in addressing the reintegration of individuals back into the community. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2022/11/28/medicaid/>