WHEREAS, Evidence shows unlimited solitary confinement is inhumane and ineffective; and

WHEREAS, Subjecting people to solitary confinement without meaningful human contact, programming, services or therapy often causes deep and permanent psychological, physical, and developmental harm; and

WHEREAS, This harm not only violates common values of decency, but also is counterproductive because people often have more difficulty complying with prison rules after being placed in solitary confinement; and

WHEREAS, Solitary confinement can be particularly devastating for certain vulnerable people, including: the young and elderly pregnant women and persons with disabilities or histories of addiction and trauma; and

WHEREAS, The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture concluded that solitary confinement can amount to torture and recommended abolishing its use beyond fifteen days and prohibiting any use of solitary confinement for vulnerable groups or for the purpose of punishment; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That a special legislative commission be and the same is hereby created consisting of fourteen (14) members: three (3) of whom shall be members of the Rhode Island House of Representatives, not more than two (2) from the same political party, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; one of whom shall be the Director of the Rhode Island Department of
Corrections, or designee; one of whom shall be a Rhode Island Department of Corrections staff member responsible for overseeing mental health services, to be appointed by the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections; one of whom shall be the President of the Rhode Island Brotherhood of Correctional Officers (RIBCO), or designee; one of whom shall be a former administrator of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections, to be appointed by the Speaker; one of whom shall be a formerly incarcerated individual who has experienced solitary confinement in Rhode Island, to be appointed by the Speaker; one of whom shall be the Executive Director of Direct Action for Rights and Equality, or designee; one of whom shall be the Executive Director of the Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence, or designee; one of whom shall be the chairperson of the Rhode Island Parole Board, or designee; one of whom shall be the Public Defender, or designee; one of whom shall be the Rhode Island Mental Health Advocate, or designee; and one of whom shall be the Director of the Rhode Island Department of Health, or designee.

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

The purpose of said commission shall be to make a comprehensive study and assess the use of solitary confinement in the Rhode Island ACI, including, but not limited to:

• Rate and length of solitary confinement sentences;

• Proportionality between disciplinary offenses and the solitary confinement sentences they induce;

• Psychological impact of prolonged solitary confinement on inmates;

• Public safety implications of prolonged solitary confinement after inmates return to the community;

• Extent to which solitary confinement has a particular impact on vulnerable populations, such as youth, and those with disabilities;

• Fiscal impact of the current use of solitary confinement;

• Extent to which the Department of Corrections' current record-keeping policies on the use of solitary confinement are adequate to making informed administrative decisions; and

• Alternatives to and best practices for reducing the use of solitary confinement, as developed by other jurisdictions, and the extent to which these alternatives impact cost, behavior, and other outcomes within prison systems.
Forthwith upon passage of this resolution, the members of the commission shall meet at
the call of the Speaker of the House and organize and shall select a chairperson from among the
legislators.

Vacancies in said commission shall be filled in like manner as the original appointment.
The membership of said commission shall receive no compensation for their services.
All departments and agencies of the state, shall furnish such advice and information,
documentary and otherwise, to said commission and its agents as is deemed necessary or
desirable by the commission to facilitate the purposes of this resolution.
The Speaker of the House is hereby authorized and directed to provide suitable quarters
for said commission; and be it further
RESOLVED, That the commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the
House of Representatives no later than January 27, 2017, and said commission shall expire on
March 27, 2017.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

HOUSE RESOLUTION
CREATING A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY AND ASSESS THE USE OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN THE RHODE ISLAND ACI

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This resolution would create a fourteen (14) member special legislative study commission whose purpose it would be to make a comprehensive study and assess the use of solitary confinement in the Rhode Island ACI, and who would report back to the House of Representatives no later than January 27, 2017, and whose life would expire on March 27, 2017.

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