

ACLU OF RI POSITION: AMEND

**TESTIMONY ON 26-H 7897,
AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS
March 17, 2026**

This legislation would require schools to develop school safety plans that would give first responders immediate access to school facilities in an emergency. The ACLU of Rhode Island has no position on the general goal of this bill, but we do wish to request one important clarifying amendment.

The bill specifically requires “unobstructed access to all of the school’s or institution’s facilities to include buildings, classrooms and grounds by law enforcement personnel and emergency medical personnel in responding to an emergency.” Importantly, the bill does not define what constitutes an emergency.

In light of the extremely aggressive actions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents that we have seen not only across the country, but right here in Rhode Island,¹ we are concerned that this bill could be interpreted as allowing ICE to enter school buildings without a warrant based on self-justified “emergencies.” We know that is not the intent of the bill, as it would contravene the thoughtful policy guidance that the Attorney General and the Department of Education have adopted to address this troubling scenario.²

To avoid any confusion or misunderstandings, we would therefore urge that the bill be amended by including a sentence to the effect that warrantless actions conducted by agents for immigration enforcement purposes do not constitute an emergency under this law.

Thank you for considering our views.

¹ In the past few months alone, ICE agents threatened to break the window of a Superior Court judge’s car in order to kidnap a high school intern and, armed and masked and without a warrant, burst past security guards into a state courthouse.

² <http://www.riag.ri.gov/media/6086/download>