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**ACLU OF RI POSITION: OPPOSE**

**TESTIMONY ON 26-H 7898,  
RELATING TO EDUCATION – HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS  
March 17, 2026**

The ACLU of Rhode Island opposes this legislation which would require the installation and use of weapons detection systems at every public entrance of any school building, gymnasium, school event facility, sporting event site, and any site where the school hosts or participates in an event.

While we understand that the goal of this legislation is to help ensure school safety, we are concerned that it represents a significant infringement on students' privacy rights. The expansion of surveillance often frames public safety and privacy as competing interests. In reality, effective public safety is built through community-based tools and systems that meaningfully support students, not as a result of indiscriminate surveillance.

Expanding this technology into schools is a flawed approach to public safety. Metal detectors are not as effective as they are portrayed. A 2017 study showed that some airports had a fail rate as high as 95% on screening checks for weapons.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, metal detectors rely on trained personnel to adequately operate them, which likely will exceed the expertise and role of school staff, notwithstanding any training the bill requires them to obtain.

Leaving aside those practical flaws, this is a technology that is expensive, disruptive, and alienating. Schools are not prisons, and they should not be turned into them in the name of protecting students.

Thank you for considering our views.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595716.pdf>