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## **ACLU OF RI POSITION: NEUTRAL/AMEND**

### **TESTIMONY ON 26-H 8522, RELATING TO FISH AND WILDLIFE – RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT OF FISHING LAWS May 19, 2026**

The ACLU of Rhode Island has no position on this legislation's intent, which is to "provide reciprocal enforcement of boating and fish and game laws with the state of Connecticut on any part of waters lying between Connecticut and Rhode Island." However, we believe it may need some clarification to ensure there are no due process concerns presented by this law's implementation.

If we understand the goal correctly, the bill would allow Rhode Island officers to arrest individuals in Connecticut waters for fishing or game violations and allow Connecticut officers to do the same in Rhode Island waters. If so, there would appear to need to be some acknowledgement that the laws being enforced are uniform in the two states. Perhaps that is the case – as this an area far outside our area of expertise – but if not, it is not clear to us that a Rhode Island officer can arrest a person in Connecticut without knowledge of the other state's laws.

The same holds true if the bill is attempting to address situations where it is unclear if the unlawful conduct is taking part in Connecticut or Rhode Island waters. Without that knowledge and a uniform set of laws, any arrest would seem to raise significant jurisdictional questions.

We are equally concerned that lines 8-10 seemingly authorize states to essentially deputize individuals to make arrests for such violations of boating or fish and game laws of any such other state, without the training requirements that the other officials listed would be required to undergo.

We recognize that we may be misunderstanding the way this law would actually work, but we wanted to at least flag this issue of concern with the submission of this testimony.

Thank you for considering our views.