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**TESTIMONY ON 24-H 7225,  
GOVERNOR’S BUDGET AMENDMENT #8 – ARTICLE 9, AMENDMENT #1  
April 24, 2024**

The ACLU of Rhode Island has no position generally on this budget article or on the Governor’s various amendments to it. However, we did wish to express our organization’s support for one particular provision in this Article 9 amendment, relating to its establishment of a “Social and Human Services Review Advisory Council.”

Specifically, the Governor’s proposed amendment would require the council to “allow providers, recipients and other stakeholders an opportunity to ask questions and provide comment.” As committee members are aware, the state’s Open Meetings Act requires meetings of public bodies to be open to public view, but it does not provide a right to public *participation*. In a report that we recently issued examining the public comment policies of municipal public bodies, we emphasized the importance of offering the public an opportunity to speak at meetings.<sup>1</sup>

The same rationale applies to extending this opportunity to meetings of state public bodies, so we appreciate that this bill makes explicit that people will have the chance to interact with the council in a meaningful way. We hope this will serve as a model, and that similar language will regularly be included in laws creating new public bodies like this one at the state level.

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<sup>1</sup> “Voicing Concerns: Public Comment Policies of Rhode Island City and Town Councils and School Committees,” February 2024, <https://www.riaclu.org/en/publications/report-voicing-concerns-public-comment-policies-rhode-island-city-and-town-councils-and>