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ACLU OF RI POSITION: OPPOSE

**TESTIMONY ON 24-H 7772,
JOINT RESOLUTION MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF APPROXIMATELY
\$30,000,000 TO RHODE ISLAND'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR SAFETY AND
SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS
April 30, 2024**

Though we appreciate the intention of providing a safe and supportive school environment for all students in Rhode Island, we are opposed to this resolution which calls for an enormous \$30,000,000 appropriation for the extremely broad and vague purposes of “school safety and security improvements,” including “audio and visual systems” and “access control systems.” We are particularly concerned that this could provide state funding for the implementation of invasive surveillance systems and technology, which we believe is resolutely inappropriate to introduce to the school environment.

As well-intentioned as a request for such funding may be, widespread surveillance technology in the school setting could deeply affect both the educational and social experiences of students. Depending on its scope, it could undermine a student’s expectation of privacy and create an environment where students are constantly under fear of being watched by unknown administrative or school staff. Although we realize that limited monitoring takes place in some schools now, the breadth and sophistication of the technology that could be purchased with such a large source of revenue is deeply concerning.

To the extent that this pot of money might be available and used to hire more school resource officers or other police agents to roam the schools, we strongly oppose this as well and have separately testified on other bills before this committee over the years that have made such proposals.

We are sensitive to the urge to address very legitimate concerns about student safety. However, we strongly disagree that encouraging expansive surveillance techniques or hiring more police officers accomplishes this goal, much less accomplishes it in an appropriate and equitable fashion which centers students’ civil rights. For these reasons, we urge rejection of this resolution.

Thank you for your consideration.