



State of Rhode Island
Office of the General Treasurer

James A. Diossa
General Treasurer

7 April 2026

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance

The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance

RE: 2026-H 7585 – *An Act Relating to Criminal Procedure – Criminal Injuries Compensation*

Chair Abney:

I write in strong support of 2026-H 7585, which would allow hit and run victims that suffer serious bodily harm to recover under Treasury’s Crime Victim Compensation Program (“CVCP” or the “Program”). Through this change, the legislature would right an unjust law that wholly bars victims with serious injuries from recovering under the Program based *only* on the actions of their offenders.

Administered by the Office of the General Treasurer, the CVCP provides direct cash assistance to innocent victims of crime across Rhode Island. Generally, an individual is eligible to receive Program funds if they have been the victim of a violent crime that results in injury or death. State law prescribes a list of 19 different criminal offenses which would qualify an individual for compensation. *See* R.I. Gen. Laws §12-25-20. This list includes “[f]ailure to stop by a driver” – *i.e.* hit and run – “in circumstances which result in the *death* of any person.” *Id.* (emphasis added). As such, the surviving relatives of deceased hit and run victims *are* eligible for compensation.

However, hit and run victims who *survive* their injuries – no matter how severe – do not qualify for compensation. State law thus excludes victims who would be entitled to compensation had their offenders been caught by law enforcement or simply remained at the scene of the crime. *See* R.I. Gen. Laws §12-25-20 (14) – (17) (providing compensation where underlying offense is driving under the influence or driving so as to endanger resulting in personal injury). **This means that those with severe injuries are qualified or disqualified based *only* on the actions of the person who caused them harm.**

This bill would help address that inequity by allowing victims of hit and runs that suffer “serious bodily injury” to recover under the program. As defined in Rhode Island law and incorporated by reference in this bill, a “serious bodily injury” is a physical injury “that creates a substantial risk of death or causes serious physical disfigurement or protracted loss or impairment of the function

of any bodily member or organ.” R.I. Gen. Laws § 31-26-1 (c)(2). **In the court system, there is a robust body of law that further defines what is – and is not – a serious bodily injury which will provide for ease in administration.** See, e.g., *State v. Scanlon*, 982 A.2d 1268, 1276-77 (R.I. 2009).

This bill will not have a material impact on Program funding and can be implemented without additional appropriation. As acknowledged by a fiscal note prepared by the State Budget Office concerning the Senate companion, CVCP claims involving vehicular crimes “*are uncommon.*” (emphasis added). “Over the past 3 federal fiscal years, including DUI related claims, there have been an average of 4 claims relating to vehicular crimes, processed annually, accounting for about 1.3% of all claims during this period.” *Id.* **The Budget Office further notes that the average claim paid out for vehicular offenses during this same period was just “\$2,725 per claim.”** *Id.*

The Budget Office’s projected impact includes two estimates: one that assumes the CVCP approves four more applications per year and one that assumes 36 more applications per year. Over the past three years, the CVCP has accepted an average of about 300 claims per year. To receive 36 qualifying hit-and-run applications where the victim suffered serious bodily injury – accounting for 10% of total claims in a given year – is wholly inconsistent with Program experience. Conversely, an increase of four applications is plausible based on the number and nature of past claims. **Regardless, the Budget Office estimated the total cost to the state to be between \$2,725 and \$24,525, both of which are manageable within the Program’s current operating budget.**

Moreover, the CVCP is – by law – a fund of last resort, which will further limit the number of qualifying claims. As a fund of last resort, claimants must demonstrate that they – *inter alia* – sought recovery from insurers, Temporary Disability Insurance benefits, and/or hospital payment assistance programs where applicable.

I strongly urge this Committee to right this inequity and remove this technical roadblock so the Treasurer’s Office can continue to assist innocent victims of violent crime. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly or to my Director of Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs, Robert Craven, Jr., at Robert.CravenJr@treasury.ri.gov.

Respectfully,



James A. Diossa
General Treasurer

cc: The Honorable Brandon Voas