

April 8, 2026

To: House Finance Committee

Re: Support for House Resolution No. 8207 – Appropriation for RI Commission on Prejudice & Bias

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for the approval of funding for the Rhode Island Commission on Prejudice and Bias. The commission's Hate Crime Training Program provides training mandated by Rhode Island General Law 42-28.2 for all law enforcement academies, and police departments, along with community groups, and victim advocates. As the former Civil Rights Coordinator at the Rhode Island Attorney Generals Office, I was responsible for organizing and preparing necessary materials for the talented prosecutors to complete their trainings. I attended all of the hate crimes trainings while at the Attorney Generals Office, and saw first hand how important the training of law enforcement officers is in this area. I cannot express how crucial data collection, which is taught during these trainings is to understand and quantify the impact on minority and at risk communities. Proper training and data collection ensures we continue to make the substantive changes necessary to keep Rhode Islanders safe.

Hate crimes pose a serious threat not only to individual victims but also to the broader sense of safety and unity within our communities. Effective prevention, identification, and response require well-trained law enforcement personnel who understand the legal, social, and cultural dimensions of these offenses. This training program represents a thoughtful and practical investment in equipping officers with the tools they need to respond appropriately and sensitively.

The requested funding is modest, especially when weighed against the potential impact. By enhancing officers' ability to recognize bias-motivated incidents, properly document them, and engage with affected communities, the program will help build trust and improve public safety outcomes. It also aligns with broader goals of promoting equity, accountability, and professionalism within law enforcement.

I respectfully urge you to approve this request. Supporting this initiative demonstrates a clear commitment to addressing bias incidents and hate crimes proactively and ensuring that all residents feel protected and respected.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ariana Ba