

April 8, 2026

To: House Finance Committee

RE: Commission on Prejudice and Bias support for [H8207](#) – Appropriation for RI Commission on Prejudice & Bias

Dear Chair Abney and House Finance Committee Members,

Established by Rhode Island General Law §42-80-2 in 1981, the **RI Commission on Prejudice and Bias** plays a vital role in addressing and preventing prejudice, bias, and hatred in Rhode Island. This 17-member body, comprised of legislators, law enforcement, and community leaders, serves as a critical link between the state, law enforcement, and the communities they protect.

The commission administers the **Hate Crime Training Program**, mandated by R.I. Gen. Laws §§**42-28.2** and **42-28-46**, to ensure law enforcement, victim advocates, and community groups are equipped to recognize, report, and respond to hate crimes. The program has been especially impactful for the **Rhode Island Municipal Police Training Academy (RIMPTA)** and for police officers across the state, providing both new recruits and experienced officers with the tools and knowledge to serve diverse communities with cultural competence, fairness, and professionalism.

The commission also receives hate crime reports from the public, refers victims to resources, and advises law enforcement, the Governor, and the General Assembly on laws and policies related to bias. It participates in community education events statewide and serves as a trusted resource for first responders.

The RICPB's federal Shepard/Byrd Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant will terminate September 30, leaving the Hate Crime Training Program for Law Enforcement & Advocates with zero funding.

We respectfully urge the State of Rhode Island to allocate **\$100,000 in annual funding** to the RI Commission on Prejudice and Bias. This modest investment is essential to uphold state law, continue critical partnerships like the one with RIMPTA, and protect the rights and safety of all Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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