



April 6, 2026

To: Senate Finance Committee

RE: Commission on Prejudice and Bias support for H 8207– Appropriation for RI Commission on Prejudice & Bias

Dear Senate Finance Committee Members,

Rhode Island General Law 42-80-2 established the Commission on Prejudice and Bias (the commission) in 1981 to study prejudice, bias, and hatred in Rhode Island in order to revise and codify all laws relating to prejudice, bias, and hatred. This diverse 17-member commission includes state legislators, gubernatorial-appointed community leaders, Attorney General-appointed members, and law enforcement representatives, and is a prominent and necessary channel of communication between legislators, law enforcement, and the communities they are sworn to serve and protect. Our organization collaborates with the commission, and understands its invaluable impact in Rhode Island.

The commission's Hate Crime Training Program provides training mandated by Rhode Island General Law 42-28.2 for all law enforcement academies, as well as police departments, victim's advocates, and community groups. These trainings support compliance with RI General Law 42-28-46, which mandates the reporting of hate crimes. The Hate Crime Training Program has been operating without funding since Oct. 1, 2024 and can no longer be expected to fulfill the demands of these laws.

The commission receives reports of hate crimes and incidents from Rhode Islanders and directs victims to resources, while advising police departments and the Office of the Attorney General where appropriate. The commission provides guidance to the Governor, Attorney General, and legislature on critical laws and policies related to prejudice and bias. The commission conducts and participates in community education events around the state, and serves as a resource for first responders.

The commission had successfully operated through grants from the Victims of Crime Act, the United States Bureau of Justice Assistance, the RI Department of Administration, and the RI Public Safety Grants Administration. While the need for the commission's work has expanded, these funding streams once relied on no longer enable the execution of the commission's mission statement. We write today in support of state funding in the amount of \$100,000 to ensure compliance with the aforementioned laws and continuation of the commission's work.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact our office for any additional information.

Sincerely,

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