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April 7, 2026

To: House Finance Committee

RE: Support for House Resolution 8207

Dear Chair Abney and House Finance Committee Members,

My name is Tricia Driscoll, Executive Director of the Center for Mediation and Collaboration RI and a member of the RI Commission on Prejudice and Bias. I submit this testimony in support of H-8207 to sustain the Commission's critical work.

Established in 1981 under RI General Law 42-80-2, the Commission is a diverse 17-member body that brings together legislators, law enforcement, and community leaders to address prejudice, bias, and hate in Rhode Island. It serves as a vital bridge between government and the communities they serve, and our organization has seen firsthand its impact.

The Commission administers a Hate Crime Training Program required by law (RIGL 42-28.2) for law enforcement academies, victim's advocates and community partners, supporting compliance with mandated hate crime reporting. However, this program has operated without funding since October 1, 2024, and can no longer meet these obligations.

The Commission also supports victims, advises state leaders, and provides statewide education and resources. When reports of hate crimes and incidents are received from residents, the Commission works with partners to provide support and guidance. While it has historically relied on grant funding, those sources are no longer sufficient to meet growing needs.

We urge approval of \$100,000 in state funding to ensure compliance with the law and continuation of this essential work. Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tricia Driscoll".

Tricia Driscoll
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