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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY ON 25-H 5361, RELATING TO ELECTRONIC INFORMATION AND DATA PRIVACY ACT April 24, 2025

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this legislation, which would generally require police to obtain a search warrant in order to gather location and other identifying information of subscribers and customers from computer service providers.

Rhode Island's laws have failed to keep up with the enormous privacy implications of the electronic-based society we live in, where enormous pieces of personal information about our lives reside, and this bill is an important step in reclaiming individual privacy.

Courts have already upheld the need for a warrant before searching the contents of a personal electronic device. This legislation would guarantee another critical step of privacy in limiting police access to other personal information that is stored electronically. The ability for law enforcement entities to view and search through such sensitive information should be restricted to cases in which probable cause has been established and a search warrant has been issued. This is a fundamental component of the right to privacy. The fact that the information is collected and maintained by a third party should not be a sufficient reason to strip it of privacy protection from prying eyes.

The ACLU urges the committee to recognize the importance of codifying practices that will protect the privacy rights of Rhode Island residents from Big Brother intrusion as this bill seeks to do.

Thank you for your consideration.