

ACLU OF RI POSITION: OPPOSE

**TESTIMONY ON 25-H 6229,
RELATING TO CRIMINAL PROCEDURE – STATE CRIME
LABORATORY COMMISSION
April 24, 2025**

The ACLU of Rhode Island strongly opposes this bill which would move the independent state crime laboratory into the purview and authority of the Department of Attorney General.

We find this maneuver to be an inappropriate law enforcement intrusion into what must remain an independent process. Criminal trials are inherently adversarial, and giving increasingly more control to the Attorney General over evidentiary and forensic analysis starkly undermines this balance and disproportionately favors the prosecution.

Central to our concerns is that this legislation specifically permits the attorney general to appoint and remove at will the director of the state crime laboratory. It further empowers the director to carry out all responsibilities “as may be directed by the attorney general.” Page 8, lines 21-22. Under this legislation, the attorney general is granted significant authority over the laboratory’s operations and presents serious concerns about prosecutorial influence on evidence testing and forensic analysis.

Similarly, this legislation inappropriately delegates important administrative responsibilities to the attorney general. Specifically, it directs all other state departments, agencies, and bodies to cooperate with the laboratory and “furnish any information that the laboratory shall require.” Page 8, lines 28-29. This legislation also gives the attorney general the power to promulgate rules and regulations for the state crime laboratory. Both of these provisions have the potential to create total power over evidentiary matters within the office of the attorney general.

Equally concerning, this bill repeals the provision that created the State Crime Laboratory Commission. While the Commission itself has faced access and accountability issues, its total elimination raises serious transparency concerns. This elimination removes a layer of oversight designed to protect the laboratory’s independence, and removes the driving force of collaboration the Commission was designed to encourage. Replacing that independence with unilateral control by a single official will compromise public trust in the judicial process and the reliability of forensic evidence.

For these reasons we strongly oppose this bill. Preserving the independence of the state crime laboratory is essential in any justice system that values fairness and objectivity. Thank you for considering our views.