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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY ON 26-H 7282, RELATING TO CRIMINAL PROCEDURE – STATE CRIME LABORATORY COMMISSION February 5, 2026

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this legislation which would increase the membership of the Rhode Island Crime Laboratory Commission (RICLC) to include a broader range of stakeholders who actively use and participate in the state crime laboratory.

Presently, law enforcement representatives make up a majority of the RICLC membership. This legislation would add the Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, the President of the Rhode Island Bar Association, the Public Defender, and the President of the Rhode Island Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers to the RICLC membership. Including these members would better reflect the range of individuals and institutions that rely on the state crime laboratory.

In the past, we have advocated for the independence of the state crime laboratory. Expanding the RICLC to include additional stakeholders with relevant experience would strengthen oversight and help safeguard the laboratory's continued independence.

Additionally, one of the stated legislative findings of the RICLC is that "the functions of a state crime lab must be coordinated in an efficient and effective manner." R.I.G.L. §12-1.1-2(3). The current RICLC membership lacks some vital perspectives necessary to fulfill this directive. Expanding membership to include these voices would improve coordination by ensuring that additional participants have a seat at the table.

For these reasons we support this legislation. Thank you for considering our views.