

**TOWN OF COVENTRY SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-04-01

IN SUPPORT OF RHODE ISLAND HOUSE BILL 7356 and SENATE BILL 2216  
“SCHOOL EMPLOYEE BACKGROUND CHECKS”

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WHEREAS, the Coventry School Committee recognizes the importance of maintaining the highest standards of safety and care within all schools, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to learn in a secure and nurturing environment; and

WHEREAS, the School Committee acknowledges that protecting students from potential harm, abuse, or misconduct is a paramount responsibility of every educational institution, whether public, charter, or nonpublic; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island House Bill 7356 and Senate Bill 2216, entitled “School Employee Background Checks,” propose an act relating to education that codifies a comprehensive system of criminal and employment background checks for all school employees, consistent with §16-21.9 of the General Laws; and

WHEREAS, the proposed legislation requires all school districts, charter schools, nonpublic schools, and contracted service providers to obtain detailed employment histories, conduct rigorous reviews of all prior educational and child-related employment, and verify disclosures regarding any prior investigations, disciplinary actions, or misconduct allegations; and

WHEREAS, these Bills strengthen Rhode Island’s statutory framework by ensuring that all school employment decisions are informed by complete and verified information, reducing the potential for individuals with a history of abuse, inappropriate conduct, or false credentials to gain employment in positions involving regular contact with children; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly’s proposed act complements existing laws under §16-2-18.1 by enhancing the depth and reliability of criminal background checks and requiring timely employer cooperation in providing prior employment information; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 7356 and Senate Bill 2216 also introduce accountability measures that include civil penalties for applicants who willfully falsify or omit information, and establish clear duties for both in-state and out-of-state employers to respond promptly, ensuring that hiring entities have the accurate, verified information needed to make safe decisions; and

WHEREAS, the Coventry School Committee supports legislation that promotes transparency, integrity, and accountability in education, and aligns directly with the Town's long-standing commitment to student welfare and the protection of youth in our community; and

WHEREAS, the School Committee further recognizes that the enactment of House Bill 7356 and Senate Bill 2216 would not only enhance public trust in Rhode Island's school systems but also provide parents, educators, and residents with greater confidence in the safety of local educational institutions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the School Committee of the Town of Coventry hereby expresses its strong and unequivocal support for Rhode Island House Bill 7356 and Senate Bill 2216: "School Employee Background Checks."; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Coventry School Committee urges the Rhode Island General Assembly and the Governor to enact this bill into law promptly upon passage, recognizing it as a necessary and proactive measure to safeguard children throughout the State of Rhode Island; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution shall be forwarded to:

- The Honorable Members of the Rhode Island Senate and House of Representatives; and
- The Governor of the State of Rhode Island; and
- The Rhode Island Department of Education; and
- The Coventry Town Manager.

Adopted by the School Committee of the Town of Coventry, this 26th day of February, 2026.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

James P. Pierson, Chairman

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Jackie Zerba, Secretary to School Committee