

The Just Criminal Justice Group, LLC



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Owner/Manager

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Carol Hagan McEntee
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
The Statehouse
Providence, RI 02903

RE: House Bill No. 7208

BY Felix, Place, McEntee, Morales, J. Lombardi, Tanzi, Kislak, Potter, Cruz, Giraldo ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO CRIMINAL PROCEDURE -- ELECTRONIC INFORMATION AND DATA PRIVACY ACT {LC3862/1} (Requires law enforcement agencies to obtain search warrants for electronic information, data, location information and other identifying information of subscribers and customers, except in specified circumstances.)

HEARING DATE: Wednesday, February 11, 2026

Dear Chairperson McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

This act would enact a comprehensive statutory scheme requiring law enforcement to obtain search warrants for electronic information, data, location information, and other identifying information of subscribers and customers except in specified circumstances. The Just Criminal Justice Group, LLC (JCJG) is proud to lend its support to this thoughtful piece of legislation for the following reasons:

1. The legislation provides consistency across the board for law enforcement. Rather than the 'case by case' rules that develop over time as the result of litigation, this legislation provides clear and 'up front' guidelines that are easy to recognize and adhere to. Therefore, reduces the risk of losing a piece of evidence necessary for a successful prosecution that can result when applicable rules prescribing predicates for admissibility are unclear or still evolving.
2. The Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Article 1, Section 6 of the R.I. Constitution protect against unreasonable searches and seizures. Requiring a that a court order be obtained before law enforcement may access sensitive information during an investigation ensures that law enforcement must demonstrate probable cause to a judge before conducting a search, thus safeguarding individuals' privacy rights.
3. Requiring a warrant involves judicial oversight, where a neutral magistrate evaluates the evidence presented by law enforcement to determine if there is probable cause to conduct the search. This helps prevent arbitrary or unjustified use of intrusive technology.

4. Requiring a warrant promotes transparency in law enforcement practices. It ensures that the use of new technology is subject to legal scrutiny and that individuals are informed when their privacy is being infringed upon.
5. Strikes a balance between law enforcement's investigative needs and individuals' right to privacy, ensuring that searches are conducted in a manner consistent with constitutional principles and legal safeguards.
6. The legislation is also consistent with a long history of the General Assembly providing law enforcement with bright line rules that balance the reliability and admissibility of evidence with privacy concerns. For example:
 - a. *§ 9-19-25. Illegally seized evidence inadmissible.* Provides that "In the trial of any action in any court of this state, no evidence shall be admissible where the evidence shall have been procured by, through, or in consequence of any illegal search and seizure as prohibited in § 6 of article 1 of the constitution of the state of Rhode Island." **Enacted by the General Assembly in 1938.**¹
 - b. *§ 12-5.1-1 to 16. Interception of Wire and Oral Communications Act.* **Enacted by the General Assembly in 1969.**
 - c. *§ 12-5.2-1 to 5. Pen Registers and Trap and Trace Devices.* **Enacted by the General Assembly in 1992.**
 - d. *§ 12-32-1 to 6. Cellphone tracking.* **Enacted by the General Assembly in 2016.**

Finally, the JCJG believes that this thoughtful piece of legislation strikes the proper balance between public safety and privacy concerns especially considering the most recent advances in technology that allow law enforcement virtually unfettered access to information and materials where individuals enjoy a reasonable expectation of privacy.

Respectfully Submitted,



Michael A. DiLauro, Esq.

CC: House Judiciary Committee

¹ In *Weeks v. United States*, 232 US 383 (1914) the US Supreme Court issued two important holdings. First, the Court held that the Fourth Amendment's guarantee against unreasonable searches and seizures prohibited the use at trial of evidence seized by federal officials in violation of the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution. Second, the Court held that the limitations on government action provided by the Fourth Amendment did not apply to state and local officials. It wasn't until 1961 that the exclusionary rule created by the court in *Weeks* was made binding upon the states in *Mapp v. Ohio*, 367 US 643 (1961). In *Mapp*, the Supreme Court of the United States adopted the exclusionary rule as a national standard.