

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

160 Pine Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

TELEPHONE: (401) 222-3492

FAX: (401) 222-3287

EMAIL: info@ripd.org

WEBSITE: www.ripd.org

February 10, 2026

TESTIMONY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER REGARDING:

House Bill No. 7487

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO ANIMALS AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY - DOGS

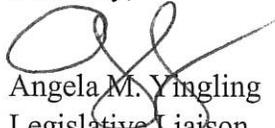
Chairwoman Hagan McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender opposes House Bill 7487, which increases penalties for both first and second violations of the law concerning the care of dogs. While the Office of the Public Defender recognizes the importance of protecting all animals, especially our canine companions, this bill significantly increases the penalties for *all* subsequent violations under this section—not all of which are created equal.

The first amendment to the bill, which increases the monetary fine for a first violation, seems to be in line with inflation rates and is not the main source of our concern. Rather, the second proposed amendment, which adds subsection (b) to § 4-13-13, makes any subsequent violation of the law (within a ten-year period) a full misdemeanor, a twelve-fold increase in potential punishment. In addition, the acts prohibited in this section vary wildly in severity, but can all incur the same penalty. For example, the proposed § 4-13-13(b) prohibits the acts of removing the collar of a licensed dog and temporarily detaining him or her. Under the proposed bill, these actions would incur the same penalty as much more serious offenses, such as the killing, poisoning, or maiming of a licensed dog.

Because these activities contain different levels of culpability but could incur the same penalty, the Office of the Public Defender opposes HB7487 in its current form.

Sincerely,



Angela M. Yingling
Legislative Liaison

Office of the Public Defender

401-222-1505

ayingling@ripd.org