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From: Tara Pinsky <tara.pinsky@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2026 1:17 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Written Testimony in Support of House Bill H7549; Protect Sports Officials in Rhode Island

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To the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in strong support of House Bill H7549, which would make assault on a sports official a felony in Rhode Island.

I have been officiating in Rhode Island since 2016, serving as a Girls High School Lacrosse Official, High School Boys Football Official since 2019, NCAA College Women's Lacrosse Official since 2020, and NCAA College Football Official since 2023. I currently serve as President of the Rhode Island Women's Lacrosse Officials Association (RIWLOA) and Secretary of the Rhode Island Football Officials Association (RIFOA), and I am one of the lead instructors for the RI Football Education Committee. These are volunteer positions that require many more hours than just the time spent on the field.

Every official must take an annual exam on the rules, and some college-level positions require a fitness test. We are qualified to be on the field officiating games, whether the perception is otherwise.

There is no other place I would rather be than on a field officiating, training, or observing other officials. It is my happy place.

However, I am always concerned about my safety—especially when leaving the field after a game, and even more so after a contentious one. As officials, we prepare for the worst by parking near each other, away from other cars, with our cars facing out for quick departure. We walk on and off the field together as a safety precaution.

I have been verbally abused on the field and walking to my car. On one occasion, a Rhode Island surgeon yelled at me, "You suck!" after I made a call he didn't like. I asked the game administrator to remove him, and they did. I often think: Can you imagine me yelling at him during surgery that he sucks?

While we do have tools to manage spectators, coaches, and players during the game, it is after the game concludes when the real issues arise—when we are most vulnerable.

I love what I do, and I should not have to worry about my safety because of a call I made in a game. This bill would provide necessary protections for officials who dedicate countless hours to making youth, high school, and college sports possible in Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Tara Pinsky