

Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor



Colonel Michael J. Winquist
Chief of Police

"A Nationally Accredited Agency"

5 GARFIELD AVENUE
CRANSTON, RHODE ISLAND 02920
Phone (401) 942-2211 TDD 943-1410
Fax (401) 477-5113

February 13, 2026

Chair Carol McEntee and Members
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly

RE: Letter of Support for House Bill 7554 – Relating to Criminal Offenses — Public Utilities

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my strong **support** for **House Bill 7554**, introduced on which seeks to modernize and strengthen Rhode Island's statutes regarding bomb threats and false reports. In an era where "swatting" and sophisticated hoaxes can paralyze public institutions, this legislation provides necessary legal tools to protect our communities.

False bomb threats and reports of shooting or other dangerous events place an immense, unnecessary burden on our state's limited public safety resources. Every time a false report is transmitted, it triggers a massive law enforcement response, often involving:

- **Diversion of Emergency Personnel:** Critical police, fire, and EMS units are diverted away from real, life-threatening emergencies to respond to a fabrication.
- **Resource Exhaustion:** These incidents tax the technical and physical resources of our public utilities and emergency services at a high cost to taxpayers.
- **Public Disruption:** These actions intentionally prompt lockdowns or evacuations of educational, religious, or public buildings, creating a climate of "terror, anxiety, unrest, [and] fear."

H 7554 does more than just punish; it provides a framework for public safety and rehabilitation. By allowing the court to consider whether a person poses a danger to themselves or the community during bail determinations, the bill authorizes vital conditions such as:

- Extreme risk protection orders pursuant to chapter 8.3 of title 8.
- No trespass orders for any educational, religious, or public institution.
- Mental health assessments and referrals for treatment or substance abuse counseling.

By classifying these modern threats as felonies punishable by up to ten years in prison or a fine of up to \$1,000, Rhode Island sends a clear message that endangering the public through deception is a grave offense. This act ensures our laws keep pace with the evolving nature of public threats while prioritizing community safety through its bail and counseling provisions.

I respectfully urge the House Judiciary Committee to provide a favorable recommendation for **H 7554**.

Respectfully submitted,

Col. Michael J. Winqvist

Colonel Michael J. Winqvist
Chief of Police
Cranston Police Department