



State of Rhode Island
DIVISION OF STATE POLICE
State Police Headquarters, 311 Danielson Pike, North Scituate, Rhode Island 02857
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT AND DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Colonel Darnell S. Weaver
Superintendent

March 4, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee, Chair
House Committee on Judiciary
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: 2026-H 7211– An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – The Rhode Island
Community Protection Act**

Dear Chairperson McEntee:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Public Safety (“DPS”), please accept this letter expressing concerns regarding legislation currently before the House Committee on Judiciary entitled, “An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – The Rhode Island Community Protection Act,” which would make it a criminal act for a police officer to wear a mask in the course of performance of their duties, unless explicitly allowed under a narrow set of circumstances.

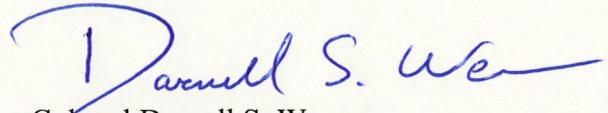
Pertinent to DPS, the proposal would apply to all Rhode Island State Police troopers, Capitol Police officers and deputy sheriffs within the Division of Sheriffs. Although the proposal sets forth some limited exceptions that would allow police officers to wear masks or face coverings in distinct situations, the proposal did not seek input from DPS and does not contemplate all situations faced by law enforcement officers. For example, law enforcement officers working outside in the winter months may wear a mask to protect their faces and to simply help keep them warm. January’s average temperature was 27.4 degrees and February’s average temperature was 26.8. Perry, Jack. (March 3, 2026). *This Winter earned its spot in the record books, but when will it end?* | The Providence Journal. Under the proposal, however, the act of wearing a face covering to stay warm while working outside in cold weather or when it is actively snowing would be a criminal act unless it was during a “declared weather emergency.”

Additionally, the act would create a new cause of action and opens the door to potential civil liability for police officers in their personal capacity. As widely reported, law enforcement agencies nationwide, including Rhode Island, are coping with staffing shortages and a historical decline in interest in joining the law enforcement profession. The proposal will further alienate potential candidates from deciding to enter public service and may expedite the retirements of current law enforcement officers.

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I thank you for the opportunity to express the position of the Department of Public Safety on legislation currently before the House Committee on Judiciary, H-7211 entitled, "An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government – The Rhode Island Community Protection Act."

Respectfully,



Colonel Darnell S. Weaver
Superintendent, Rhode Island State Police
Director of Public Safety

cc: Honorable Members of the House Committee on Judiciary
Nicole McCarty, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House
Major Ronald Longolucco
Adam Sholes, Esq. – DPS Chief Legal Counsel
Governor's Office