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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY ON 26-H 7211, RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT – THE RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY PROTECTION ACT March 4, 2026

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this legislation prohibiting law enforcement from wearing masks and requiring visible identification when interacting with the public.

This legislation is particularly important considering the increased presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers in our communities. While this legislation (appropriately) is not exclusively targeting the practice of wearing face coverings by ICE officers, these officers are often the ones wearing face coverings to prevent disclosure of their identities. Regardless of the agency involved, when officers detain or arrest individuals, the public should know who they are and what agency they represent.

Transparency and accountability are necessary layers to establish public trust in law enforcement practices. When an officer conceals their identity, it undermines that public trust. If a person is detained or arrested and the organization the officer represents is not clear, it makes it that much more difficult for family or friends of that person to seek help. This is not a practice that should be tolerated in a free society.

Thank you for considering our views.