

Chairperson McEntee and the Rhode Island Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to respectfully request that you support the Rhode Island Civil Rights Enforcement Act. This is a key piece of legislation that both restores the rights of Rhode Islanders to sue for violations of state constitutional rights, something the Rhode Island Supreme has taken away by declaring that our dearest and most sacred constitutional rights are not "self-executing" and thus are little more than pretty words. The Court has left it to the legislature to pass legislation outlining how and in what fashion our constitutional rights can be vindicated in the courts. This bill does exactly that.

Further, and incredibly important in this moment, it also allows Rhode Islanders to sue federal agents for violating their state constitutional rights. With highly limited remedies in federal court for federal agent violations of federal constitutional rights, and an increasing number of such violations as ICE continues to terrorize communities and attack people, this is extraordinarily important. Placing such protections in a bill that applies to government agents broadly, like this one, also ensures that it won't be struck down by the federal on the basis of discriminatory treatment of federal agents as recently happened to the California bill banning ICE agents from wearing masks in [U.S. v. California](#).

Please support this bill, help protect Rhode Islanders from having our state constitutional violations trampled on without recourse by government agents, federal, state, or local, and breath life into the guarantees the Rhode Island Constitution makes about our freedoms, rights, and liberties, which are currently, and distressingly, a dead letter.

Thank you,

Michael da Cruz