



Rhode Island Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

Weybosset Hill Station, P.O. Box 23101
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

March 2, 2026

Representative Carol Hagan McEntee, Chairperson
House Judiciary Committee
The Statehouse, Room 205
Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill #2026-7360
HEARING DATE – Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Dear Chairperson McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

The Rhode Island Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (RIACDL) writes to express our support for House Bill #2026-7360, which establishes a narrow, common-sense privilege against civil arrest for people who are going to, attending, or returning from court proceedings, unless the arrest is supported by a judicial warrant or judicial order.

On January 15, 2026, court security did not intervene when masked agents carrying firearms rushed into a State courthouse because there was no clear legal framework governing what authority, if any, they had to question or halt a warrantless civil arrest inside a State courthouse.

Until recently, it would have seemed unthinkable that agents would detain someone attending a judicial proceeding without judicial process. Yet that uncertainty now places court personnel in an impossible position and erodes public confidence in the courts as neutral, orderly institutions. This legislation is necessary to provide clarity to protect litigants, witnesses, court staff, and the integrity of the judicial system itself.

Courts work only when people can safely appear. When immigration agents are permitted to seize or harass individuals at courthouses without judicial process, defendants may skip court rather than risk detention; witnesses may refuse to testify; and victims and family members may avoid seeking protection. This harms everyone who depends on the courts to function: litigants, judges, court staff, and the public..

Rhode Island Constitution Article I, Section 5 promises that every person “ought to find a certain remedy, by having recourse to the laws,” and to obtain “right and justice... completely and without denial; promptly and without delay.” This bill protects that promise by ensuring that State courthouses remain places governed by law and judicial oversight, not fear and unchecked civil enforcement.

For these reasons, RIACDL respectfully urges the Committee to recommend passage of House Bill #2026-7360.

Sincerely,

Kara Hoopis Manosh,
RIACDL President

Camille A. McKenna,
RIACDL President-Elect

President: Kara Hoopis Manosh | President Elect: Camille McKenna | Director of Finance: Angela M. Yingling | Director of Communications: Rebecca Aitchison | Director of Membership: Kelsey McDonald | Executive Committee: Leah Boisclair, Kimberly Chiulli, Daniel. Ciora, Maria Deaton, Michael A. DiLauro, Michael Ewart, Collin Geiselman, Andrew Horwitz, Megan Jackson, John MacDonald, Jason Ollmann., Sarah Potter

RIACDL is an affiliate organization of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL). RIACDL was founded in 1988 by the late Richard M. Casparian, former Public Defender for the State of Rhode Island from 1988 until his death in 1997. RIACDL's mission includes, “working toward achieving justice and dignity... for persons accused of crime and the criminal justice system, and to influence the criminal law for the betterment of the criminal justice system...” RIACDL is registered with the Rhode Island Secretary of State's Office as a nonprofit organization.