



May 28, 2026

Dear Chair LaMountain, Chair McEntee, and esteemed Judiciary Committee members,

The Rhode Island Commission on Prejudice and Bias (RICPB) strongly supports 2026 bills [S2045](#) & [H7360](#), the Protect Our Courts Act, which protects people attending Rhode Island court proceedings from civil arrest without a judicial warrant.

Established by law in 1981, the RICPB is a state commission of community leaders, state legislators, law enforcement officers, and Attorney General staff with a mission “to study and report on [and] revise and codify... laws relating to all forms of prejudice, bias and hatred.”

The violent arrests by ICE agents at or near courthouses have created an atmosphere of terror. Permanent residents, asylum seekers, undocumented individuals, and citizens fear being abducted and disappeared by masked men. This legislation protects individuals seeking justice—as litigants, witnesses, or supporters of family members involved in legal proceedings—by preventing intimidation and unwarranted arrests. These safeguards ensure everyone can participate in legal proceedings without fear, regardless of their circumstances.

Fear of arrest may discourage individuals from filing restraining orders, child custody petitions, or other crucial legal actions. This particularly impacts victims of domestic violence, tenants facing eviction, and immigrants seeking legal status or protections. The threat of arrest at courthouses may also dissuade key witnesses from testifying in criminal or civil cases, thereby weakening courts' ability to administer justice fairly.

Without explicit protections, individuals—especially those from marginalized communities — may be unfairly targeted and arrested in retaliation for exercising their legal rights, further perpetuating systemic inequalities. Allowing indiscriminate civil arrests in or near court facilities increases the risk of wrongful detentions, leading to costly litigation and potential liability for law enforcement agencies and state entities. Arrests that interfere with court attendance compromise the fairness of legal proceedings, particularly when individuals are detained before they can present evidence or testify on their own behalf or on behalf of others. Such practices obstruct justice and erode trust in the legal system, making it more difficult for courts to fulfill their essential societal role.

By passing this legislation, Rhode Island can ensure that all individuals—regardless of background or circumstances—can exercise their right to due process and access the courts without unnecessary fear or obstruction.

We urge you to consider the long-term benefits of this amendment and support its adoption, and thank the committee for its attention to this important issue. You are welcome to contact us at calloutprejudiceri@gmail.com or 401-648-9498 for questions or further information.

Sincerely,

B. Joe Reddish, III
Chair, RI Commission on Prejudice & Bias

Taylor Dumpson
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