



Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center

Serving Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

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March 18, 2026

House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for H7200, H8086, H8078, and H8093

Dear Chair and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the **Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center (EBCC)**, I write to express our strong support for House Bills H7200, H8086, H8078, and H8093. These measures represent important steps toward strengthening protections for children, increasing institutional accountability, and expanding access to justice for survivors of sexual abuse.

Founded in 1979, the Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center has served Rhode Island for nearly 50 years. Our mission is to provide support, safety, and empowerment to victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and all forms of interpersonal violence, while working to eliminate violence through advocacy, education, and systemic change. EBCC provides comprehensive services including crisis intervention, advocacy, counseling, emergency shelter, and legal advocacy for survivors and their families.

Through our direct service work with survivors, we have seen firsthand the profound and lasting impact that childhood sexual abuse can have on individuals, families, and communities. Survivors frequently face significant barriers to reporting abuse and pursuing justice, particularly when the harm occurred years earlier or involved institutions that failed to protect them.

Many survivors of child sexual abuse delay disclosure for years or even decades due to trauma, fear of retaliation, shame, manipulation by perpetrators, or the power dynamics often present in institutions such as schools and religious organizations. When institutions fail to act on warning signs, conceal abuse, or lack appropriate reporting structures, survivors are further harmed, and accountability is delayed or denied. Policies that increase transparency, strengthen reporting requirements, and expand legal pathways to justice are critical to ensure that survivors are heard and that institutions entrusted with the safety of children uphold their responsibility to protect them.

The legislation before you address several of these systemic barriers.

H7200 recognizes that institutions that enable, conceal, or fail to prevent abuse must also be held accountable. Allowing survivors to pursue claims against responsible entities, not only individual perpetrators, reflects the reality that institutional failures often play a critical role in allowing abuse to occur and continue.

H8086 extends the statute of limitations for second-degree sexual assault, providing survivors—especially those abused as minors—with additional time to come forward. Trauma, fear, and power dynamics frequently delay disclosure, and extending these timelines helps ensure survivors are not denied justice due to circumstances beyond their control.

H8078 promotes transparency and public accountability by allowing grand juries to issue reports regarding systemic wrongdoing, subject to judicial review. Greater transparency can help prevent future harm and ensure institutions entrusted with the care of children are held to the highest standards.

H8093 strengthens mandatory reporting requirements in educational and religious settings, reinforcing the shared responsibility to protect children and promptly report suspected abuse.

Together, these bills represent meaningful reforms that acknowledge the realities survivors face while ~~reaffirming~~ ^{reaffirming} Rhode Island's commitment to protecting children and holding institutions accountable.

The **Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center** respectfully urges the House Judiciary Committee to support and advance H7200, H8086, H8078, and H8093.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of Rhode Island's children and to ensuring survivors of abuse have access to justice.

Sincerely,



Judith S. Earle

Executive Director

Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center