



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT
AFL - CIO

To: House Judiciary Committee
From: Jeremy Sencer, RIFTHP Field Representative
Date: March 24, 2026
Re: **Armed Campus Police**
Testimony in **Opposition** to H 7128 (O'Brien, et al.)

Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals (RIFTHP), I submit testimony in opposition to H 7128, legislation that mandates firearm training for campus police and expands their status under the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights. This bill would alter the structure of campus safety at Rhode Island's public colleges and universities. RIFTHP opposes this legislation due to concerns related to campus climate, accountability, and resource allocation.

Faculty at Rhode Island College, represented by RIC/AFT Local 1819, have expressed opposition to this proposal based on their experience working directly with students and campus safety personnel. Their perspective reflects concerns that expanding the role of armed enforcement on campus may negatively impact student trust and willingness to engage with campus services, particularly among populations already less likely to interact with law enforcement.

The bill also establishes a statewide mandate rather than allowing institutions to determine appropriate safety models based on campus-specific needs. Existing approaches to campus safety include coordination with local law enforcement, unarmed campus policing, and prevention-focused strategies. In many cases, municipal police are available to respond when armed intervention is necessary.

H 7128 further expands Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights protections to campus police. This raises questions about oversight and consistency across public-sector employees, as these protections exceed those available to many other campus workers, including educators.

There are also fiscal considerations associated with implementation, including training, equipment, and ongoing operational costs. These expenditures should be weighed against alternative investments that support student safety and well-being, such as mental health services and campus-based prevention efforts.

For these reasons, and consistent with concerns raised by educators at Rhode Island College, RIFTHP urges the Committee to oppose H 7128.

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