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*"A Nationally Accredited Agency"*

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March 9, 2026

The Honorable Representative Carol McEntee  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
82 Smith Street-Room 205  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: ***Opposition to House Bill H-8077 Relating to Criminal Procedure-Automated Plate Readers***

Dear Chair McEntee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill H-8077, which would impose significant and unnecessary restrictions on law enforcement's use of automated license plate readers (ALPRs). As drafted, the bill would severely limit the effectiveness of this proven technology and hinder our ability to prevent crime, identify offenders, and protect the public.

Since August 2021, the Cranston Police Department has successfully used ALPR technology, delivering measurable public safety benefits. These cameras have directly contributed to solving serious crimes, including carjackings, assaults, murders, robberies, and bank robberies. They have also played a critical role in locating 17 missing or endangered individuals, recovering more than 100 stolen vehicles, and apprehending 92 wanted persons, as well as 17 suspects involved in stolen property cases. Without ALPR technology, many of these cases may have remained unsolved, and vulnerable individuals might not have been located.

House Bill H-8077 would effectively eliminate the use of ALPR technology to investigate property crimes. Every victim deserves justice, and limiting access to a tool that helps identify offenders undermines our ability to protect the community. ALPR technology is neither new nor controversial. It has been widely used by law enforcement agencies across the country for decades, including in neighboring states such as Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Courts have consistently upheld the constitutionality of ALPR use. In *Commonwealth v. McCarthy* (2021), the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that law enforcement's use of ALPR data without a warrant did not violate the Fourth Amendment. Federal courts have similarly determined that scanning license plates in public does not constitute a search because license plates are displayed in plain view. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit affirmed this principle in *Arrington v. City of Norfolk*. In total, two federal courts of appeals, twenty federal district courts, and four state appellate courts have upheld the constitutionality of license plate reader technology. Today, ALPR systems are used in all fifty states, with most jurisdictions imposing few, if any, statutory restrictions on their use.

Opponents of ALPR technology, including the ACLU, have frequently mischaracterized how these systems operate. In reality, ALPR cameras capture images of the rear of vehicles traveling on public

roads and record only the license plate number and basic vehicle information. They do not identify drivers or passengers. No Department of Motor Vehicles inquiries are conducted unless an officer manually verifies a potential match. The system simply compares license plates against the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database, which contains records of stolen vehicles, vehicles associated with criminal activity, and alerts related to missing persons. Officers must verify any alert before taking enforcement action to ensure accuracy and due process. These systems do not use facial recognition or other advanced surveillance capabilities.

It is also important to recognize that many other camera systems already operate throughout Rhode Island, including Department of Transportation highway cameras, red light cameras, and bridge toll cameras. Many of these systems capture far more detailed information, including live video footage of drivers and occupants. Yet these technologies are not subject to the same restrictive oversight proposed in H-8077. Courts have long recognized that there is no reasonable expectation of privacy when traveling on public roadways. License plates are specifically designed to be visible for identification purposes, and both law enforcement officers and private citizens may lawfully observe or photograph vehicles in public spaces.

The Cranston Police Department's Flock Safety ALPR system also includes strong safeguards to protect privacy. License plate data is automatically deleted after 30 days unless it is preserved as evidence in a criminal investigation. The system is governed by strict departmental policies, including controlled access, officer training requirements, and regular audits to ensure appropriate use. Since implementing the system, we have not received a single public complaint regarding its use, nor have we identified any instances of officer misuse. The Cranston City Council held a public hearing before approving the program, and community members have consistently expressed appreciation for the additional layer of safety these cameras provide.

At a time when communities across the country are facing increases in both violent and property crimes, ALPR technology remains a critical investigative and crime prevention tool. Restricting or eliminating its use would significantly undermine law enforcement's ability to respond effectively and protect the public.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to reject House Bill H-8077 and allow law enforcement agencies to continue using ALPR technology responsibly and effectively. I also invite you to review the Cranston Police Department's Flock Safety transparency portal for additional information about our program and its safeguards.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (401) 477-5001.

Respectfully,



Colonel Michael J. Winkist  
Chief of Police  
Cranston Police Department