

03/24/2026

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Aaron Ley, and I am writing in my individual capacity as a member of the Bristol Town Council. I write in support of state legislation (H8077) to govern the use of automated license plate reader devices, including those enhanced by artificial intelligence.

In November, the Rhode Island State Police appeared before our Town Council to request the installation of an ALPR camera. At that time, the agency did not have a formal policy in place governing the use of this technology. The Council declined to move forward and requested that a written policy be developed. The agency subsequently returned with a policy, but it did not fully address several of the concerns raised during our deliberations.

As a result, the Council was required to undertake the development of a local ordinance to address gaps in the state policy. These gaps included ambiguous definitions, the absence of clear auditing standards, no requirement for a public log of system use, and limited accountability and oversight mechanisms.

Additionally, the current state policy may be modified at any time without public notice or opportunity for comment. Establishing clear statutory standards at the state level would ensure that any meaningful changes to the use of this technology occur through a transparent, democratic process that allows Rhode Islanders to weigh in.

Since this issue first came before our Council, several municipalities across the country have reconsidered or rescinded their participation in similar programs. At the same time, states such as Washington are actively moving toward comprehensive statewide regulation of ALPR systems. Several states, such as Virginia and New Hampshire, already have statewide statutes in place.

While the Town of Bristol has now adopted an ordinance to govern these cameras, many municipalities have not. Absent state action, this will likely result in a patchwork of local regulations. A statewide framework would provide consistency, clarity, and accountability for all Rhode Island residents, particularly as individuals regularly travel across municipal boundaries.

One example illustrates the potential for disparity. A review of the City of Providence Police Department's transparency portal indicates that it shares ALPR data only with agencies within Rhode Island. By contrast, a review of publicly available information suggests that the Town of Tiverton has shared data with a much broader network, potentially including hundreds of agencies nationwide. Even though the Town of Tiverton expressly forbids using its cameras for immigration enforcement, it may nevertheless be sharing data with jurisdictions that participate

in federal immigration enforcement programs under the Immigration and Nationality Act, including those operating under Section 287(g).

These differences underscore the need for clear, uniform standards at the state level.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Aaron Ley, Ph.D.  
Town Councilman  
Bristol, RI