

20 Lewis St.

Providence, RI 02906

March 24, 2026

House Committee on Judiciary

Rhode Island State House

82 Smith St

Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairwoman McEntee and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to oppose H8087, the bill on law enforcement placing tracking devices on individuals and objects. I am a member of Rhode Islanders for Personal Privacy.

For police to place tracking devices on an individual – or on the individual’s property – is highly intrusive, and although it might be suitable in extreme cases it should not be a technique for ordinary investigations. Allowing it to happen on the basis of just a warrant would be appropriate if it was a routine investigative step. Warrants, and other routine investigative steps, are often used to check into someone who may be innocent. But placing tracking devices is a far more intrusive step, which gives both government officials and a variety of tech companies access to a large amount of highly personal information that the individual never intended to share with anyone. That kind of measure should not see the sort of routine use that can be authorized with a mere warrant. Instead, placing tracking devices is more similar to a wiretap, which requires a court order under RIGL 12-5.1-2. Making the use of tracking devices subject to a court order rather than a warrant would ensure that it can be used when really needed, without making it a pervasive technique. If tracking devices can be placed merely with a warrant, we are one step closer to giving government the powers that highly repressive states use without any accountability. And importantly, the bill includes no accountability requirements – there are no consequences if tracking devices are placed illegally, and if an individual is wrongly surveilled the individual is never told.

Sincerely,

Randall Rose