



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND JUDICIARY

SUPREME COURT  
OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

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April 2, 2026

**Via Electronic Mail ([HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov](mailto:HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov))**

Chair Carol Hagan McEntee  
House Committee on Judiciary  
Rhode Island State House  
House Lounge  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**Re: House Bill No. 7280: An Act Relating to Criminal Procedure: Sentencing and Execution**

Dear Chair Hagan McEntee:

I write on behalf of the Rhode Island Judiciary regarding House Bill No. 7280, scheduled to be heard and considered this evening before the House Committee on the Judiciary. If enacted, this legislation would require Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell of the Rhode Island Supreme Court to serve as the chairperson of a newly-created Bail Task Force consisting of 10 members, including Chief Suttell. There is no option for Chief Suttell to appoint a designee, as the statutory language on his position in the Bail Task Force is mandatory. The Judiciary takes no position on the proposed Bail Task Force itself but seeks to raise concerns regarding the required appointment of Chief Suttell. His service as chairperson would obligate him to recuse himself from all Supreme Court matters involving issues of bail, which would undermine the administration of justice in this state.

As you are aware, judicial officers are bound by the Rhode Island Code of Judicial Conduct (the "Code") requiring them, among other things, to discharge their judicial duties in an impartial, unbiased, and fair manner. Appointing any judicial officer to the Bail Task Force, let alone the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, would likely create, at least, the appearance of impropriety in any cases involving bail-related issues. Accordingly, the affected judicial officer would be obligated under Rule 2.11 of the Code to recuse him or herself from such cases to purge the appearance of impropriety occasioned by his or her Task Force membership. See Rule 2.11, Comment [1]. Recusal is decidedly disruptive to the case parties, deprives the matter of the recusing judicial officer's expertise, and consumes judicial resources. To the extent Chief Suttell could appoint a designee, that does not refute the appearance of impropriety.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Judiciary's concerns regarding the mandatory appointment of Chief Suttell to the Bail Task Force.

Sincerely,

*Chrisanne Wyrzykowski*

Chrisanne Wyrzykowski  
General Counsel