



Matthew C. Moynihan
Chief of Police

South Kingstown Police Department

1790 Kingstown Road
South Kingstown, Rhode Island 02879
(401) 783-3321 Fax (401) 789-8139
www.southkingstownri.com



April 8, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
Chairwoman, House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: House Bill 7647 – Juvenile Records / Firearm Background Checks

Dear Chairwoman McEntee,

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 7647 relating to juvenile records and their use in firearm background checks. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the sponsors of this legislation for addressing an important public safety issue while maintaining appropriate safeguards for juvenile privacy.

As Chief of Police for the Town of South Kingstown, and through my involvement with the FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Advisory Policy Board, I have had the opportunity to work with policies related to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). Through that work, it has become clear that there is a gap between federal requirements and Rhode Island law regarding the availability of certain juvenile records during firearm background checks.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which was enacted in June of 2022, requires enhanced background checks for individuals under the age of twenty-one. Rhode Island's congressional delegation supported the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act when it was passed in 2022. These enhanced checks include a review of juvenile records that may meet federal disqualification criteria under 18 U.S.C. § 922(g). However, Rhode Island's current statutory framework limits the ability to access those records, creating a gap in our ability to ensure that all relevant information is considered during firearm eligibility determinations.

House Bill 7647 addresses this issue in a thoughtful and balanced manner. The legislation would allow for the limited disclosure of juvenile records specifically for the purpose of conducting firearm background checks and determining whether an individual meets federal disqualification criteria. Importantly, this bill maintains the longstanding principle that juvenile records should remain confidential and protected from general public access.

This legislation is narrowly tailored to ensure that only records directly relevant to firearm eligibility are considered. It also reinforces the rehabilitative intent of the juvenile justice system by maintaining confidentiality protections and ensuring that such records are sealed upon the individual reaching the age of twenty-one.

From a public safety perspective, this is a necessary and reasonable step. It ensures that individuals who may be prohibited under federal law from possessing firearms are properly identified during the background check process, while still preserving the opportunity for rehabilitation and reintegration.

Additionally, several states, including Connecticut and Vermont, have already taken legislative steps to align with the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Rhode Island has not yet made those statutory changes. House Bill 7647 provides a clear and responsible path forward to bring our state in line with these efforts.

For these reasons, I believe House Bill 7647 represents a balanced, practical, and necessary update to Rhode Island law that enhances public safety while maintaining appropriate protections for juvenile records.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have, and I thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew C. Moynihan', with a stylized, flowing script.

Matthew C. Moynihan
Chief of Police