



Matthew C. Moynihan  
Chief of Police

## South Kingstown Police Department

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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 8081 – Expungement / Firearm Licensing

Dear Chairwoman McEntee,

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 8081, which addresses an important issue related to the consideration of expunged records during the firearm licensing process. I would also like to thank the sponsors of this legislation for advancing a proposal that strengthens public safety while maintaining the intent of Rhode Island's expungement laws.

Under current law, individuals who have had a criminal record expunged are, in most circumstances, permitted to state that they have not been convicted of that offense. While this is appropriate in many contexts—such as employment, housing, and other civil opportunities—it presents a challenge when applied to firearm licensing.

House Bill 8081 addresses this issue in a practical and balanced manner by requiring applicants for a license or permit to carry a pistol or revolver to disclose prior convictions, even if those records have been expunged, and by allowing law enforcement agencies to consider that information when evaluating suitability.

This ensures that the information required to be disclosed can also be appropriately considered in the decision-making process. Without this alignment, licensing authorities may be aware that a prior conviction exists but are limited in their ability to fully evaluate that information when making a suitability determination.

Importantly, this bill does not eliminate expungement or undermine its purpose. Expungement remains a valuable tool that allows individuals to move forward without the burden of a public criminal record. This legislation simply recognizes that firearm licensing is a unique context where a more complete understanding of an applicant's history is necessary to assess suitability.

From a law enforcement perspective, suitability determinations require more than a review of current criminal history. They often involve evaluating patterns of behavior, prior contacts, and other relevant information—including documented mental health-related incidents or substance use involvement—that may not result in a conviction but still inform a responsible decision.

Additionally, from a broader policy perspective, consideration should be given to applying this same standard to firearm purchases under Rhode Island General Laws Chapter 11-47. Ensuring

consistency in how expunged records are evaluated across both permitting and purchasing processes would further strengthen public safety and provide clearer guidance for law enforcement and the public alike.

For these reasons, I believe House Bill 8081 represents a reasonable and necessary step that enhances public safety while preserving the underlying intent of Rhode Island's expungement laws.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew C. Moynihan', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Matthew C. Moynihan  
Chief of Police