



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

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Attorney General

April 8, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
Chairwoman
House Committee on Judiciary
State House, House Lounge
Providence, RI 02903

Re: HB 8081 – Reviewing Expunged Records for CCW Permits

Dear Chairwoman McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I write today to express my support for HB 8081, legislation that would allow law enforcement to consider expunged records when reviewing the suitability of applicants seeking a license or permit to carry a pistol or revolver.

Rhode Island law appropriately supports reentry and rehabilitation of individuals previously convicted of certain misdemeanor and felony offenses through the expungement process. At the same time, the law recognizes that, in certain limited and sensitive contexts, access to expunged records remains necessary to protect the safety of our community. Accordingly, current law already requires disclosure of expunged records in specific circumstances, including applications for employment with a law enforcement agency, admission to the bar, teaching and coaching certifications, and positions involving the care and supervision of young children.

HB 8081 extends this same principle to firearm concealed carry permit applications. The decision to grant a concealed carry permit necessarily implicates important public safety consideration. In many respects, these determinations are as consequential, if not more so, than other contexts in which disclosure of expunged records is already permitted. This legislation does not undermine the expungement process. Rather, it creates a narrowly tailored exception allowing law enforcement to access relevant information solely to evaluate an applicant's suitability to obtain a permit to carry a firearm. By providing this limited access, law enforcement will be able to make more informed decisions about an applicant's suitability to carry a firearm in public, while preserving the broader benefits and intent of expungement. It would *not* impose any new licensing requirements nor result in automatic denial. Applicants also retain the right to appeal any license denial.

Rhode Island law vests in me the discretion to issue both concealed and open carry permits statewide. The Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation within my Office, which carries out this permitting function, exercises this authority with great care by conducting thorough background checks to ensure permits are issued only to qualified applicants. Access to

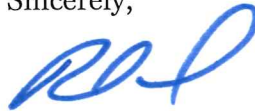
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these records – many of which reflect information already known to law enforcement – would enable my Office and other state and local law enforcement agencies to make more informed decisions and carry out our public safety responsibilities effectively. Providing such access would not make the information public, nor would it necessarily result in the denial of a permit. Rather, it would ensure that law enforcement has a complete and accurate picture of the person applying for a concealed-carry permit.

As Attorney General, I am committed to supporting policies that both promote rehabilitation and ensure the safety of our communities. In fact, I have led by example by assisting countless Rhode Islanders applying to have their convictions expunged through Attorney General-sponsored expungement clinics, as well as providing daily assistance to individuals navigating the petition process. HB 8081 strikes an appropriate balance by maintaining the integrity of the expungement process while ensuring law enforcement has the information necessary to evaluate the suitability of applicants for firearms licenses.

I applaud the General Assembly for its efforts in passing commonsense gun violence prevention legislation in recent years, while recognizing that more must be done to protect Rhode Islanders. The passage of this legislation would be another important step towards preventing gun violence in our state. I appreciate the Committee's careful consideration.

Sincerely,



Peter F. Neronha
Attorney General