

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

160 Pine Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

TELEPHONE: (401) 222-3492

FAX: (401) 222-3287

EMAIL TO: info@ripd.org

WEBSITE: www.ripd.org

April 28, 2026

TESTIMONY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER REGARDING:

House Bill No. 7489

ENTITLED, AN ACT RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- MOTOR VEHICLE OFFENSES

Chairwoman Hagan McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

The Office of the Public Defender **opposes** House Bill 7489, which would require that an Ignition Interlock System (IIS) be a mandatory part of any DUI or refusal to submit to a chemical test sentence.

We are concerned that the bill could disproportionately impact indigent individuals by exacerbating their financial hardships and potentially extending their license suspensions. The installation cost, monthly lease, and maintenance and calibration fees for IISs, particularly those with added camera systems, place an additional strain on individuals already struggling to meet basic needs. The average cost for an interlock system over a six-month period (the minimum period in this bill) is between \$900-\$1,100, in addition to the approximately \$1,800 in costs associated with a misdemeanor DUI conviction.

For an indigent defendant, assuming they own a vehicle, installing an IIS could require saving money over time, effectively lengthening the period of license suspension to which they were sentenced. While we recognize that some period of license suspension is necessary in DUI and refusal cases, it is concerning whenever legislation would impact poor people—for whom maintaining employment is the most critical—more than others.

We truly appreciate that the proposal of an IIS Fund is meant to lighten this financial burden, but we are concerned that the fund may not be able to cover the costs of mandatory IID over the required period. Additionally, we would anticipate a several months-long delay in the creation and implementation of rules and regulations for such a fund, leaving those indigent persons convicted of DUIs during this period unable to afford the extraordinary mandates of this bill. Further, the bill adds a mandatory fee for the IIS Fund, from which indigent defendants are not exempt.

Generally speaking, we do not oppose the expanded use of IISs as a matter of policy, but we believe mandatory requirements presents significant challenges, particularly for the indigent

people whom we represent. Therefore, we would recommend that continued reliance on judicial discretion in sentencing be maintained and we urge the Committee to reconsider H7489.

Sincerely,

/s/ Angela M. Yingling

Angela M. Yingling

Legislative Liaison

Office of the Public Defender

401-222-1505

ayingling@ripd.org