

Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor



Colonel Michael J. Winquist
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February 13, 2026

Chair Carol McEntee and Members
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly

RE: Letter of Support for H7489 – Ignition Interlock and Impaired Driving Accountability

Dear Chairwoman McEntee and Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for **House Bill H7489**, legislation that strengthens Rhode Island's impaired driving laws by expanding the court's ability to require ignition interlock devices and/or blood and urine testing for individuals convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol and/or controlled substances.

Driving under the influence remains one of the most serious threats to public safety on Rhode Island roadways. Impaired drivers place innocent motorists, pedestrians, and families at risk every day. H7489 provides practical, evidence-based tools that will help prevent repeat offenses while reinforcing accountability for those who demonstrate dangerous behavior behind the wheel.

This bill makes important improvements to Rhode Island General Laws §§ 31-27-2, 31-27-2.1, and 31-27-2.8 by clarifying judges' and magistrates' authority to impose meaningful monitoring conditions. The expanded use of ignition interlock devices and drug testing requirements provides a direct safeguard against recidivism from impaired driving, while still allowing individuals to maintain conditional driving privileges for work, medical appointments, and other necessary obligations.

Additionally, H7489 recognizes an important reality: impaired driving is not limited to alcohol. As drug-impaired driving continues to rise, it is essential that our legal system has modern tools to address controlled substance impairment, particularly in cases where alcohol may not be present. The bill's focus on testing and monitoring ensures that sentencing conditions match the actual nature of the offense.

Of particular importance is the creation of the Ignition Interlock System Fund, which would assist indigent defendants required to comply with ignition interlock requirements but are unable to afford the costs. This is a fair and responsible approach that promotes compliance, enhances roadway safety, and ensures that public safety protections are not undermined by financial hardship.

H7489 is a balanced, commonsense public safety measure that will reduce repeat impaired driving offenses, enhance judicial oversight, and ultimately save lives. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the House Judiciary Committee to support and advance this important legislation.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to public safety in Rhode Island. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Col. Michael J. Winquist". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Colonel Michael J. Winquist
Chief of Police
Cranston Police Department