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April 28, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903
HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov

Support H. 8088 – Relating to Criminal Procedure – Search Warrants

Dear Chairwoman McEntee and Honorable Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association, I write in support of H. 8088, legislation that modernizes the search warrant process by authorizing the issuance of electronic warrants under clearly defined circumstances.

This bill provides law enforcement with a practical and necessary tool to respond to serious and time-sensitive incidents, particularly those involving impaired driving resulting in death or serious bodily injury. By allowing judicial officers to issue warrants electronically, this legislation helps ensure that critical evidence can be obtained in a timely manner while still preserving judicial oversight and constitutional protections.

Under current practice, delays in obtaining a warrant—especially outside of normal court hours—can result in the loss of vital evidence. H. 8088 addresses this challenge by establishing a structured process for electronic communication between law enforcement and the judiciary, including sworn affidavits, real-time communication, and documented judicial authorization.

Importantly, the bill is narrowly tailored. It limits the use of electronic warrants to specific serious offenses and maintains clear procedural safeguards, ensuring both efficiency and accountability. It also recognizes the realities of modern policing, where collaboration across jurisdictions and rapid response capabilities are essential.

This legislation reflects a thoughtful balance between public safety needs and individual rights. It equips officers with the tools necessary to conduct thorough investigations while maintaining the integrity of the warrant process.

For these reasons, the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association respectfully urges passage of H. 8088.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Sidney Wordell (ret.)
Executive Director
Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association