

Town of Charlestown
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The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
State House
Providence, RI 02903

HouseJudiciary@rilegislature.gov

SUPPORT H. 7753 – An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses – Disarming a Peace Officer

Dear Chairwoman McEntee and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to you today in support of H. 7753.

As Chief of Police in Charlestown, Rhode Island, I have seen law enforcement encounters that change in an instant because a person attempts to take a police officer's weapon or equipment. When an individual attempts to remove or interfere with an officer's firearm, less-lethal tools, or communication equipment, the risk escalates immediately—not only for the officer, but for everyone involved.

This legislation appropriately recognizes that the danger exists the moment such an attempt is made. It also reflects the importance of the full range of equipment officers rely on to do their jobs safely. Communication devices such as radios are critical to coordination and officer safety. Losing that connection can delay assistance and increase the likelihood of harm.

H. 7753 establishes a necessary standard by making this conduct a felony offense. It provides important clarity for law enforcement, prosecutors, and the courts, while reinforcing those actions which create an immediate threat to public safety will be treated with the seriousness they deserve.

Most importantly, this bill supports safer outcomes. When officers maintain control of their equipment and communication, they are in a better position to de-escalate situations and resolve incidents without unnecessary harm.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support H. 7753.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued support of public safety.

Respectfully submitted,
Col. Michael J. Paliotta
Chief of Police
Charlestown Police Department