

CITY OF WARWICK

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The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
Chair – House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Strong Support for House Bill 2026 H7753

Dear Chair and Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to express my strong and unequivocal support for House Bill 2026 H7753, which would establish a felony offense for any person who removes or attempts to remove a firearm, other weapon, or communication device from a peace officer or investigator of the Department of Attorney General.

As a Chief of Police with decades of law enforcement experience, I have witnessed firsthand the unpredictable and often dangerous nature of police work. Encounters between officers and individuals can escalate rapidly, and any attempt to disarm an officer or deprive them of their communication device creates an immediate and life-threatening situation not only for the officer involved but also for fellow officers, the individual, and the public at large. This legislation is both necessary and prudent for several key reasons:

First, it directly enhances officer safety. A firearm or weapon in the possession of a suspect, even momentarily, can result in catastrophic consequences. Officers are trained extensively to retain control of their equipment, but the law must also clearly deter individuals from attempting such dangerous actions.

Second, the inclusion of communication devices in this bill is critically important. In modern policing, communication tools are essential for coordination, de-escalation, and summoning emergency assistance. Interfering with an officer's ability to communicate can delay critical backup, hinder situational awareness, and increase the risk of harm to all parties involved.

Third, this bill establishes a clear and meaningful deterrent. Elevating this conduct to a felony reflects the seriousness of the offense and sends a strong message that attempts to disarm law enforcement officers or disrupt their ability to respond will not be tolerated. Strong deterrence is a cornerstone of public safety policy.

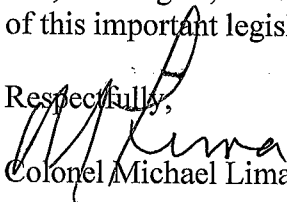
Fourth, the bill promotes accountability and reinforces respect for the rule of law. Law enforcement officers are entrusted with significant responsibilities to protect the public. Ensuring that there are appropriate legal consequences for actions that directly threaten their safety is essential to maintaining the integrity of our justice system.

Finally, this legislation aligns with common-sense public safety practices adopted in many jurisdictions. It recognizes the evolving risks officers face and provides them with an added layer of legal protection that is both reasonable and necessary.

Importantly, this bill does not expand police authority in an unreasonable way; rather, it protects against clearly dangerous conduct that has no legitimate justification. It is narrowly tailored to address actions that pose an immediate threat to life and safety.

On behalf of the men and women of the Warwick Police Department, I respectfully urge the Committee to support and advance House Bill 2026 H7753. This measure will help safeguard those sworn to protect others and, in doing so, enhance the safety of the communities we serve. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important legislation.

Respectfully,



Colonel Michael Lima