



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
Fax: (401) 831-7175
www.riaclu.org
info@riaclu.org

ACLU OF RI POSITION: OPPOSE

TESTIMONY ON 26-H 8502, RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES -- VICTIM PROXIMITY PROTECTION ACT May 14, 2026

The ACLU of Rhode Island opposes this legislation, which would vastly expand the state's current law restricting where registered sex offenders can live. In doing so, we believe this bill would actually be counter-productive to promoting public safety and should be rejected.

Among other things, the bill would prohibit all level one and two sex offenders from residing within 1,000 feet of the victim's residence, workplace, or school; would prohibit level three offenders from residing within a mile of those locations; would expand GPS monitoring requirements; and would give probation and parole officers uncontested and uncontestable authority to decide where an offender can live.

Research has demonstrated the inefficacy of sex offender residency restrictions. Stable housing and supportive services reduce recidivism, but residency restrictions like these undercut that goal. Residency restrictions can also make supervision of sex offenders in Rhode Island more difficult. In a draft policy statement prepared many years ago and echoed in national studies, the Rhode Island Sex Offender Management Task Force wrote, "Sex offenders in the states with residency restrictions are more likely to move frequently, become homeless, or 'go underground,' all of which consequences make them much more difficult to supervise and monitor."

Existing restrictions are often a contributing factor to individuals becoming homeless and a barrier to their exiting that state to stable community placements. It is clearly preferable for the public and law enforcement to have ex-offenders residing in a known location, where he or she can be regularly checked. This oversight is made much harder when someone is forced to live from shelter to shelter, in the street, or in a tent in the woods.

In addition, under the authority this bill gives parole officers, a retaliatory official could make it difficult, if not impossible, for a person to find housing. Worse, people who do have a stable housing environment and may have purchased a house and lived there for years would be required to move if their victim happened to get a new job within 1,000 feet, a mile, or even three miles from their home. Further, many of the onerous and punitive provisions in the bill apply to all ex-offenders, including those deemed at very low risk of re-offense.

Judges remain free to set appropriate limits on offenders based on individualized circumstances, and that is the way we believe these matters should be handled, not by broad standards such as those in this bill. We therefore urge the committee to reject the bill.