



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: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY ON 25-H 5877, RELATING TO PUBLIC RECORDS – ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS April 22, 2025

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this amendment to the Access to Public Records Act (APRA), which would prohibit the imposition of any charges on individuals seeking records that are stored in a government computer system.

Providing access to public records should be considered a core responsibility of any public body, and not a money-making venture. However, Rhode Islanders are routinely deterred from pursuing APRA requests because of the costs that public bodies demand be paid for access to records. But these records, and the keepers of those records, are already paid for with public funds. They are literally the public's business and should be made available as freely as possible.

In most instances, access is made even simpler when the records are stored on a computer system. That is the basic fact that this bill acknowledges, and which we agree supports providing those records at no charge to the requester.

We note that a more comprehensive APRA reform bill is expected to be reintroduced this week, and that bill would also limit the costs that could be imposed under APRA. We strongly support both efforts and hope that 2025 will be the year for much-needed reform of this extremely important transparency law.

Thank you for considering our views.