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Tuesday, March 31, 2026

Rhode Island House State Government & Elections Committee

The Hon. Evan P. Shanley, Chair

The Hon. Mary Messier, First Vice Chair

The Hon. Arthur Corvese, Second Vice Chair

Chair Shanley, First Vice Chair Messier, Second Vice Chair Corvese, Members of the Committee:

My name is Aquene Freechild, Director of Public Citizen's Democracy campaign. I submit this testimony in strong support of H7495 to authorize use of campaign funds for security-related expenses.

Public Citizen is a non-partisan, non-profit with over 3,586 supporters in Rhode Island, committed to an inclusive democracy and to representing the people's interests in the halls of power.

We advocate for protections for public officials in light of an epidemic of threats, swatting, doxing and physical attacks on officials nationwide. Democratic and Republican officials are threatened at almost equal rates. States across the country are considering bills to address these increased threats. Alabama passed a similar bill allowing use of campaign funds for security purposes just last month.

In a [regular survey of local officials](#), up to 2% report being **physically attacked**, **17% received threats within recent months**. More than a third of local elected officials [surveyed](#) report that they are **less willing to participate in public events** because of the threat environment. More than 40% are **less willing to run for reelection**.

It's for this reason that we supported and applauded this committee's leadership in passing [H5300](#) last year on a bipartisan basis, to match penalties for those who threaten election officials and pollworkers, with the penalties for threatening other public officials.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions about H 7495.

We urge the speedy passage of this bill.

Thank you.