

Dear Chair Shanley and Committee members,

My name is Cedric Ye, and I am a high school student who lives in Providence. I am writing in support of H7576, Rep. Kislak's Access to Public Records Act that follows the actions of 42 other states and would make traffic crash data publicly available in Rhode Island.

I serve as the only youth member on Providence's Green and Streets Advisory Council (although all opinions expressed are my own), a citizen advisory board advising the city on its street safety improvements. Access to crash data is incredibly important to our work when discussing where and how to prioritize limited safety funding, and the result of that access is the city's new Safe Streets Action Plan and federal Safe Streets for All grants. Providence's Police Department graciously provided citywide crash data to the Providence Streets Coalition, enabling a strong city-level understanding of our traffic violence epidemic, but most other cities are not so lucky. When I attempted to request traffic data from East Providence, the city where my school is located, I spent two hours communicating over email only to be denied. Community-led safety improvements and federal grant funding should not be limited to Providence; they should be available to any concerned citizen in our state.

Furthermore, access to crash data not only provides critical information for advocates and policymakers, it can help provide closure for crash victims and witnesses. Two weeks ago, my math teacher and her daughter witnessed a bus hit a pedestrian on Exchange Terrace. Due to the EMS response, they believed the victim had died on scene, and my math teacher was worried her daughter would experience trauma from witnessing someone's death. As part of my participation on the Advisory Council, I was able to ask a contact at the city of Providence about the crash, and the crash record revealed that the victim was thankfully in stable condition. Most individuals do not have direct contact with a city employee, and would not have any access to this critical information that would provide badly needed relief.

Similarly, the Providence Streets Coalition's crash map provides critical information to crash victims themselves by informing whether their crash had been recorded in city and state databases. Too often, victims discovered that their crash had not been included in records and was not helping to inform future policy decisions. Without public access to state crash data, crash victims cannot identify these similar gaps in crash reporting.

I urge you to please support H7576, a critical measure needed for improving traffic safety already implemented by 42 other states. Rhode Island cannot remain an outlier in secrecy and continue to deprive crash victims, witnesses, and policymakers of the information they deserve.

Sincerely,

Cedric Ye

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