

Steven Sepe

From: Derek Wietsma <dwietsma@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 29, 2026 5:24 PM
To: House State Government and Elections Committee
Subject: SUPPORT (H7576) - Access to Public Traffic Crash Records

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Dear Chair Shanley and Committee members,

My name is Derek, I live in Providence, Rhode Island with my wife, two dogs, and infant. **I am writing in strong support of H7576**, Rep. Kislak's bill that would make traffic crash data publicly available in Rhode Island, as it is in 42 other states. As a sustainability data scientist by trade, I understand firsthand how essential quality data is to understanding and solving problems. Thus far, RIDOT has refused to release Rhode Island crash data into the public domain. Their argument is that folks can make individual requests to all city and town police departments in the state, and cobble together a makeshift dataset. This is not possible, and even if it was, it would be a ridiculous waste of time and taxpayer dollars when RIDOT already has the compiled dataset. The majority of local police departments lack the time or technical capacity to export their own crash data. I have spoken to several town's policemen directly about this including in Westerly, RI, the town where I was born.

Beyond my professional experience, this issue is deeply personal. I walk about four miles a day in Providence — with my dogs, my wife, and our newborn — and have had numerous close calls in crosswalks. I regularly see cars blow through stoplights, stop signs, and crosswalks, and have been yelled at by drivers while I was legally in the right of way. I used to bike before moving here; I don't anymore. The safety of my family on these streets weighs on me constantly.

For me the refusal of RIDOT to release these crash data is part of larger culture where cars and throughput rule and pedestrian safety is swept under the rug. We cannot solve what we cannot see. Forty-two other states make this data public. Researchers, policymakers, municipalities, journalists, and advocates need access to de-identified crash records to identify hotspots and prioritize safety improvements, and hold our elected officials to account. Rhode Island should not remain a national outlier in secrecy.

I urge you to vote in for of local government transparency and support H7576.

Sincerely,

Derek

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