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ACLU OF RI POSITION: OPPOSE

**TESTIMONY ON 26-H 7985,
RELATING TO PUBLIC RECORDS – ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS
March 31, 2026**

The ACLU of Rhode Island opposes this legislation, which would require requesters for public records under the Access to Public Records Act to identify themselves in a manner that would allow for verification of their identity and would explicitly bar any anonymous public records requests.

For years, public bodies have been obligated to accommodate anonymous requests. There is no reason to discontinue this important option. We do not know how prevalent these requests are, but one can easily appreciate the myriad situations when a person might want to obtain public information but not want the public body to know their name.

Whether it is a public employee seeking to shed light on a questionable practice of their employer, an individual who fears pushback in their community if their request for documents was made known, or a person fearing retaliation from public officials in their community for seeking information, in all of these instances the option of filing a request anonymously should be retained.

Because the availability of anonymity plays a potentially useful role in the release of public information, and because this option has been a longstanding requirement in APRA, the ACLU opposes its elimination.

Thank you for considering our views.