



NEWPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT

"Police and Community - Partners in Excellence"

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY



March 31, 2026

The Honorable Eric P. LaMountain
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Support for S2604 – Relating to Motor and Other Vehicles – Definitions and General Code

Dear Chairman LaMountain and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to you today in my capacity as the Chief of Police for the City of Newport to express my strong support for Senate Bill S2604. This legislation, sponsored by Senator Euer, represents a vital step forward in modernizing our state's vehicle codes to reflect the rapidly changing landscape of micro-mobility and e-bike usage on our shared roadways.

As law enforcement officers, our primary objective is the safety of all who use our streets including pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists alike. The recent surge in e-bike popularity has outpaced our existing legal framework, creating significant challenges for enforcement, public education, and accident prevention. S2604 provides the clarity necessary for our officers to effectively do their jobs while ensuring the public understands the rules of the road.

I would like to highlight the key area where this "clean-up" bill is particularly essential from a law enforcement perspective:

Until now, the age restrictions for e-bike operation were unnecessarily obscured within the motor vehicle registration statutes. This lack of clear, centralized language made it difficult for our officers to cite specific restrictions during traffic stops or public outreach efforts.

The update to Section 31-1-3(g), which explicitly sets the minimum age for e-bike operation at 16, is a critical tool for our department. It allows us to work more effectively with the Newport School Department and organizations like Bike Newport to ensure our youth are operating vehicles that are appropriate for their age and skill level.

The current use of "electric motorized bicycle" and "motorized bicycle" interchangeably with "e-bike" creates a legal gray area, especially regarding licensing requirements. By streamlining the terminology to "electric bicycle" or "e-bike" across Title 31, the General Assembly will remove the "historical" jargon that no longer fits modern technology. This clarity is essential for our records division, our patrol officers, and the municipal court system and we recommend adjusting to consistent nomenclature.

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In Newport, we pride ourselves on being a collaborative community. We work daily with local educators and advocacy groups to foster a culture of safety. However, education can only go so far without a clear and enforceable legal foundation. S2604 provides that foundation.

On behalf of the Newport Police Department and in the interest of public safety across Rhode Island, I urge the Committee to pass S2604 to ensure our laws remain practical, clear, and focused on protecting our citizens.

Thank you for your time and for your continued support of Rhode Island law enforcement.

Sincerely,

Ryan Duffy
Chief of Police
Director of Public Safety
City of Newport