
Bill S2609 March 3, 2026

From Erica Doty <ericadoty94@gmail.com>

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To Senate Judiciary Committee <SenateJudiciary@rilegislature.onmicrosoft.com>; Sen. Lauria, Pamela J. <sen-lauria@rilegislature.gov>; Rep. Boylan, Jennifer <rep-boylan@rilegislature.gov>

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Good Morning Chairman LaMountain,

My name is Erica McDonald, I am sharing my experience with you regarding Bill number S2609.

First, I would like to sincerely thank the committee for taking the time to hear this bill today. The fact that I am able to share my experience is an example of government functioning as it should, giving citizens a voice and a role in shaping the laws that protect them.

Unfortunately, the reason I am here is because, in this case, government failed to protect us.

In December 2024, my husband and I purchased a used 2019 Toyota CH-R from Greico Toyota in East Providence. We felt confident in our decision. Toyota has a longstanding reputation for reliability and safety, and Greico Toyota is a respected dealership in our community. There was no reason for doubt. We took possession of the vehicle in January 2025 after the dealership repaired a scratch on the passenger door at our request. Almost immediately, we noticed a strange odor inside the car — similar to a wet dog that had not been bathed. We also observed small brown spatters throughout the interior. We assumed the previous owner had transported a dog and had not cleaned the vehicle thoroughly. It was unpleasant, but not alarming.

I attempted to clean the visible stains myself and planned to deep-clean the interior once the weather improved.

On Friday, April 18, 2025, I began cleaning the rear interior of the vehicle, focusing on the area where the odor seemed strongest. After just a few passes with a home upholstery cleaner, a dark reddish-brown substance began collecting in the machine's reservoir. That was the moment I realized something was very wrong.

As I looked closer, I found a small hole — about half an inch in diameter — in the back seat. I removed the trunk liners to investigate further. Beneath them, I discovered that the same dark red substance had soaked through the seat and saturated the trunk liner.

At that point, I contacted the East Providence Police Department.

The officers conducted a lengthy and thorough investigation of the vehicle, both physically and through online records. When the sergeant returned to speak with my husband and I, she delivered news that no one could ever expect to hear.

Nearly a year earlier, this car had been used in a murder-suicide in Acton, Massachusetts.

The victim was a teenage girl, murdered by her stepfather. He had been charged and was awaiting trial for the aggravated rape of his stepdaughter. After killing her, he took his own life in the driver's seat of that same vehicle.

The very car I had been driving for four months.

We were stunned. We were devastated. And we were deeply shaken.

The East Providence Police took possession of the vehicle to complete their investigation. What we learned afterward was equally disturbing. The car had changed hands multiple times before being repossessed by the lien holder and sold to Mannheim Auto Auction in Taunton, Massachusetts.

According to the detective, Mannheim's arbitration policies do not require disclosure of a vehicle's violent history so long as the car is cleaned.

The cleaning that was performed on the vehicle was clearly not enough. The evidence of what happened remained embedded in that car, physically and emotionally.

Neither we nor Greico Toyota were informed of the vehicle's history when it was purchased. Yet somewhere along the chain of transactions, that information existed.

This is the negligence.

Consumers have a reasonable expectation that a vehicle sold for public use has been made safe — not simply cosmetically presentable. We should not have to unknowingly transport our families in a vehicle that was the site of a brutal crime. We should not have to discover, on our own, the physical remnants of a homicide.

No family should endure what we experienced.

This bill is not about punishment. It is about transparency. It is about dignity. It is about ensuring that when vehicles are sold after being involved in violent crimes, that history is disclosed so consumers can make informed decisions.

Government works best when it protects its citizens from preventable harm. I am asking you today to help close this gap and ensure that what happened to us does not happen to anyone else.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Erica and Jeremy McDonald

Riverside, Rhode Island

Sent from my iPhone