



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
Fax: (401) 831-7175
www.riaclu.org
info@riaclu.org

October 14, 2025

Jeffrey Dana
City of Providence
444 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

VIA MAIL AND EMAIL

Dear Mr. Dana:

I am writing in response to a complaint our office received from Providence resident Paul Rianna, Jr., who attended last week's meeting of the City Council's Ordinance Committee where a hearing was held on proposed amendments to the Community-Police Relations Act. I am hoping that you can look into this complaint, as it raises potentially serious First Amendment concerns.

Mr. Rianna claims that the city clerk and a police officer barred him from entering the Council chambers with signs he had brought that contained messages supporting President Trump and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency. While the ACLU believes that the public should be allowed to bring signs into public meetings so long as they are not disruptive or obstructive, we understand that the City Council has a stated policy of not allowing any signs in the City Council chambers, and the purpose of this letter is not to debate that policy. Rather, Mr. Rianna's concern is that the sign ban was not enforced in a content-neutral manner.

In fact, [photos of the City Council chamber](#) at that meeting clearly show two large banners hanging from the balcony. Those banners express a message critical of ICE. Mr. Rianna therefore appears to raise a legitimate concern that his signs were banned because of their content and viewpoint, something that the First Amendment simply does not allow.

On behalf of our organization's legal committee, I am therefore writing to ask you to look into this matter and explain why Mr. Rianna was not permitted to bring his signs in while others were allowed to do so. Of course, if we have misconstrued any facts as to what happened, we welcome being corrected.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter, and I look forward to hearing back from you about it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" and last name "Brown" clearly distinguishable.

Steven Brown
Executive Director

cc: Tina L. Mastroianni, City Clerk
Col. Oscar Perez, Police Chief
The Hon. Rachel Miller, City Council President
Paul Rianna, Jr.