

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 18 ½  
“POLICE”, SECTION 18 ½ - 4 “PROVIDENCE COMMUNITY- POLICE RELATIONS  
ACT” OF THE PROVIDENCE CODE OF ORDINANCES  
October 6, 2025**

The ACLU of Rhode Island strongly supports the proposed amendments strengthening the Providence Community-Police Relations Act. These changes are not only appropriate and timely, they are essential given the continued and virulent anti-immigrant policies emanating from Washington, D.C. and the current presidential administration.

While the existing ordinance already prohibits Providence police from complying with requests to assist in federal civil immigration enforcement actions, the proposed amendments commendably seek to further define what constitutes “assisting operations”<sup>1</sup> in this context. Specifically, these amendments explicitly prohibit sharing non-public information with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials without a judicial warrant or providing them access to non-public city government premises, or using city funds or resources for immigration enforcement purposes, among other prohibited activities. Clarifying what constitutes assistance to ICE is especially important in light of a recent finding by the Providence External Review Authority that Providence police aided ICE in a civil immigration enforcement operation in July 2025, despite the wording of the current ordinance.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Page 7-8, §(h)(4)(a-f).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/crime/2025/08/22/review-authority-providence-police-helped-ice-violating-ordinance/85776909007/>

Among other vital improvements to the existing ordinance, these amendments include prohibitions on the use of “technology, data, and/or footage”<sup>3</sup> from both Providence’s Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) and the city’s network of 73 automated license plate readers (ALPRs)<sup>4</sup> to assist with federal immigration enforcement. As an organization, we have long expressed concern about the intrusive nature of ALPRs and their surveillance capabilities, and the recent introduction of the centralized RTCC only heightens the risk of potential overreach and abuse. The limits this proposal imposes on the sharing of data is of particular importance now since reports across the country have documented how ALPR information has been used by immigration agents to track down individuals. By requiring external agencies to formally agree to the protections in the ordinance before gaining access to ALPR data, the City of Providence will take a meaningful step towards reining in these surveillance tools.

Additionally, we support the amendments in this proposal that would strengthen the remedies associated with violations of this ordinance.<sup>5</sup> Ensuring individuals have meaningful recourse when their rights are violated, and those that are noncompliant are held responsible, is indispensable for the integrity of this ordinance. In addition to allowing for awards of compensatory damages, the proposal would, just as importantly, allow for organizational rights of action, ensuring that community groups can bring suit on their own behalf or for impacted individuals who may not be able to do so, or be fearful of doing so, on their own. However, to maximize the effectiveness of this provision, we would urge one additional amendment to the proposal: including the possibility of recovering attorneys’ fees upon a successful suit. The

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<sup>3</sup> Page 4, §(f)(2-3).

<sup>4</sup> <https://transparency.flocksafety.com/providence-pd-npd-lpr-study-ri>

<sup>5</sup> Page 8-9, §(i)(2-3).

availability of such an award provides incentive and resources for individuals and organizations to pursue these cases, which might otherwise be financially impossible.

By adopting these amendments, Providence has the opportunity to serve as an example by taking meaningful steps to protect our immigrant community members and neighbors and reaffirming its commitment to safeguarding civil rights. We applaud the sponsors of this proposal for their efforts and look forward to welcoming its enactment into law.

Thank you for considering our views.