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ACLU OF RI POSITION: OPPOSE

TESTIMONY ON 26-S 2709, RELATING TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY – COMMITTEES AND STAFF May 28, 2026

The ACLU of Rhode Island opposes this bill because of the burdensome and onerous impact it would have on small non-profit organizations seeking grants from the General Assembly.

Just last year, the General Assembly passed the law this bill is seeking to amend and expand. That law was adopted after a great deal of negotiation and awareness of the potential adverse effect of broad reporting requirements on small non-profits. This legislation would revisit and undermine the work that went into that law.

It would require the smallest of organizations – the local Little League or Girl Scouts troop that receives a legislative grant, for example – to make note of every reimbursement made to up to three of its members, including volunteers, for such things as gas, mileage, and lodging travel expenses incurred in going to a game or other activity. It would additionally require reporting a breakdown of all its funding sources.

If there is concern about the lack of transparency in the General Assembly grant process, we believe this bill has the wrong focus. Those objections have generally not been about the groups getting the grants *per se*. Rather, it is about the secretive nature of the legislative grant process and how the decisions get made on who will be given grants. This legislation would not address that issue at all.

Instead, it would invade the privacy and impose significant burdens on many small non-profit organizations that seek funds, as they are often small volunteer groups that are receiving relatively small sums of money.

For these reasons, the ACLU opposes this legislation. Thank you for considering our views.