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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

**TESTIMONY ON 22 – H 7938,
AN ACT RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT –
LAW ENFORCEMENT INTEGRITY ACT
April 13, 2022**

Especially with the perspective of the last two years, the importance of thoughtfully narrowing and reining in some of the excessive activities of our law enforcement agencies has been a particularly salient and appropriate issue. In fact, since 2020, the National Conference of State Legislators reports that 544 bills across the country have been enacted concerning policing – three of those were in Rhode Island, and two of those three statutorily provided for a statewide police body camera system. Of the 106 bills enacted nationwide that concerned restricting the use of force by police officers, none were enacted in Rhode Island.

It is for these reasons that we strongly support this legislation which would restrict the use of force by police officers; put in place a requirement to report use of force; implement data collection requirements for consensual or nonconsensual contact between a police officer and a civilian; and set forth civil litigation procedures for a loss of rights suffered by an individual during an encounter with law enforcement. These are policies for which the importance is clear from the devastating George Floyd incident in May of 2020, and which have been implemented in many places across the country in response to the outcry against systems which can leave individuals subjected to harsh police misconduct with little recourse. This bill is important in its entirety, but we note appreciation for specific provisions addressing use of force in the course of civilian First Amendment activities.

In short, this bill critically provides increased accountability and transparency in policing systems, which have long operated under policies which largely provide immunity and unwarranted secrecy. We strongly urge passage of this bill which would provide sorely needed provisions for law enforcement accountability.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.